

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	21/07/2016
Unique reference number	SC036240
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 Jones
Registered manager	Patricia Topliss
Inspector	Ros Chapman Rachel Griffiths

Inspection date	21/07/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Not judged
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	Good

SC036240

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Children and young people benefit from positive relationships with staff whom they trust and in whom they have confidence.
- Children and young people make progress in a variety of areas, including health, education and emotional well-being, and, as a consequence, their life chances improve.
- The physical environment has significantly improved. Children and young people now live in a newly built house, which offers homely accommodation of a high quality.
- Facilities to promote independent living are good. The home has a separate house attached to it where one young person can experience living alone while having the support of staff nearby.
- Partnership working is well established and leads to the effective provision of appropriate support. Effective working with parents leads to better family relationships and positive contact with people who are important to children and young people, and whom they may rely on when they leave this home.
- Children and young people feel safe and become safer as a result of staff knowledge, understanding and practice in safeguarding them. The work of child sexual exploitation champions is particularly proactive and positive.
- The home is led and managed well. There has been a significant improvement in the ethos, which is reflected in the positive comments that children, young people and stakeholders have made.
- Shortfalls have been identified, which have not had a negative impact on the care and support provided, but have the potential to do so if not addressed. These include staffing levels, first aid training, the workforce-training plan, local authority documentation and return-home interviews.

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 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 persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that each child's case records include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3, and that they are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b))	26/08/2016
The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child. (Regulation 13(2)(d))	26/08/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that every effort is made so that the responsible local authority provides an opportunity for a child to have an independent return interview after they have been missing from care or away from the home without permission. The home should take account of the 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)
- The registered manager should have a workforce plan, which is updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and should be used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of the staff. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person must ensure that staff have the relevant skills and

knowledge to be able to administer basic first aid and minor illness treatment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.12)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home, which is owned and managed by the local authority, is registered to provide care and accommodation for six children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/12/2015	Interim	Not judged
30/09/2015	Interim	Not judged
20/02/2015	Interim	Not judged
15/10/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Children and young people benefit from living in this home. They become safer, their outcomes improve and they make progress in a number of areas. The care and support that staff provide are directed by the home's detailed, clear and up-to-date placement plans. These are individual and regularly reviewed through monthly network meetings. This ensures that changes are identified and responded to appropriately by all professionals involved in the child's or young person's life. Children and young people have positive relationships with staff. A number of parents confirmed this, saying, for example: 'She gets on well with staff, especially her keyworker, who she looks up to and thinks highly of'. Perhaps more importantly, children and young people themselves comment very positively about the home and the staff. Comments include: 'Here the staff are good and understanding. They give me space when I need it but are also always there when I need them', and: 'Staff spend lots of time with me and there is always someone here I trust and can talk to.' These relationships ensure that children and young people trust their adult caregivers and come to them for advice and support, which keeps them safer and helps them negotiate the complexities that they face. Children and young people have all made progress in various ways. For some, their ability to manage their anger has improved and they are calmer and more settled. Others have made very good progress in relation to their education, in some cases, from having no education to now managing a good level of engagement. Their health, both emotional and physical, has improved by their accessing the appropriate services, again, for some, for the first time in a long while. Significantly, the staff have worked very well with parents, and this has resulted in improved family relationships. A parent said: 'Staff have worked really well with me and my child, and our relationship has improved, resulting in us spending quality time together.' The voice of the child/young person is strong in this home. The manager seeks regular feedback, and ensures that she acts on this, using this opportunity to have a one-to-one discussion with the child/young person concerned. There are regular young people's meetings, which again are overseen by the manager who clearly gives feedback on any issues raised. Action plans and incentives include the child's/young person's views, which they also sign and are overseen by the manager. One child is involved in the Children in Care Council, giving him a voice in the wider aspects of the council's provisions for children looked after. The staff, children and young people have, until recently, been living in a different children's home provided by the local authority. Staff put a lot of time and effort	

into ensuring that the move back went smoothly, recognising that this was potentially unsettling. All children and young people had a welcome pack in their rooms in recognition of the move back. Any children and young people new to the home are similarly welcomed, and visit beforehand, when possible, to help them to settle and adjust to their new surroundings.

This home has been completely rebuilt and now offers a high standard of accommodation, including ensuite bedrooms and homely communal areas. The children and young people were all involved in choosing their colour schemes, bedding and the home's decor. One young person said: 'We had a big say in what this house is like. We chose the colours and pictures for the walls and we helped finish off the painting. I like our new home.' They have an investment in their environment and do not want to see it damaged.

On a day-to-day basis, children and young people have positive experiences. Not only is their living environment improved, they are engaged in positive activities which benefit their health and improve their self-confidence and self-esteem. This includes being a member of a football team, going to the cinema, roller skating and bowling, and keeping chickens and rabbits. Celebrations and achievements are recognised well. For example, one young person's birthday was on the day of the inspection. She had designed her birthday cake, which the cook had made to her specifications. All children and young people have a homemade birthday cake that reflects their individual interests.

Transition planning is good. The newly built home has a separate house attached to it, which offers young people the opportunity to experience independence while still having the support of staff. An independent reviewing officer commented of a young person: 'Staff are doing everything they can to prepare him for adulthood, practically and emotionally.' A young person commented: 'Staff are going to help me with life skills. I can already cook, clean and wash, but the staff are going to help me prepare for having my own place.' There is a good independence programme, which staff use to prepare young people with the skills they need, including emotional resilience, for the transition to independent living, and thus ensure that it has the best possible chance of success.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Children and young people say they feel safe, and they become safer as a result of living in this home and the actions that staff take to protect them. There is a good	

understanding of risk and vulnerability, and comprehensive risk management plans are implemented, regularly reviewed and updated. One parent commented: 'My daughter is safer here than she was in other homes because she likes the staff and gets on with them.'

Staff and managers are very clear about how they respond to children and young people who are either absent or who are missing from care. There are individualised risk assessments and protocols, and these are updated in the light of emerging concerns. Network meetings are held regularly to review risk and the actions needed to protect young people. One young person commented: 'I know I have somewhere I feel safe to come back to. When I am away with friends and family, I stay in contact with staff. I always feel welcome when I return as it is like a big family.' A parent remarked: 'My son is safer here than he was at home. He knows here that if he runs away, he will always be welcomed back and that means he does not stay away and he has no fear of the consequences. As a result, his running away has reduced.'

Staff always request a return interview from the local authority when a young person returns from being missing. However, when these are not completed, there is no evidence that the incident is followed up. Additionally, when young people return after a period of absence, the staff complete the return interview, and there is no evidence that they have been offered the opportunity to be seen by someone independent of the home. Thus, opportunities to explore and act on the reasons for being missing or absent from care are lost.

There is a high standard of proactive and preventative work in relation to sexual exploitation. For example, the child sexual exploitation champions from all the local authority's children's homes meet regularly to identify links between the young people, and potential triggers and risks. This group information sharing is likely to be far more effective than an individual approach in identifying wider, community issues and networks, thus affording young people an additional layer of protection. Staff undertake good one-to-one work in relation to e-safety and keeping safe. They demonstrate a good understanding of the issues. For example, they maintain a chronology of all possible concerns so that trends and patterns are more easily identified. Children and young people are kept safer as a result of these staff practices.

The management of challenging behaviour has improved. There has been a significant reduction in the use of physical intervention, with only one incident since the children, young people and staff returned to these premises in May. Managerial oversight is good, which enables staff to learn and develop their practice when necessary. Each child or young person has incentives to work towards, as a more positive approach to achieving change. Consequently, the home is calmer, more settled and provides a far more pleasant and homely atmosphere in which children and young people can thrive.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager is experienced and knowledgeable and is currently working towards the required qualification. She is child-focused and aspirational for the children and young people to achieve the very best. She leads by example and provides a good role model for staff to emulate. Children and young people find her accessible and easy to engage. Her monitoring and oversight of staff practice, taken in conjunction with her direct involvement with the children and young people, result in her knowing them well and having a very positive relationship with them. The regular network meetings, weekly incentive setting and monthly action plan reviews ensure that the manager has a good understanding of the progress that children and young people are making. The manager has a good and accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and has worked hard to bring about change to ensure that it achieves its stated aims, which are, 'to make sure they have a framework of care and education that keeps them safe and gives them a chance to mature'. Although this home has only been operational again since May 2016, following a period of 16 months' closure for rebuilding, the same staff team and most of the children and young people have been living in another children's home operated by the same provider. There has been a notable positive change in ethos and operation, which is still being addressed through staff training and development. One professional commented: 'Things have changed in this home. Staff work very well with a network and they are no longer in the office all the time.' All the staff have the required, or equivalent, qualification. They feel well supported through accessible managers, regular supervision and staff meetings. Their targets for the coming year have recently been set through comprehensive individual performance plans. These provide a good baseline for ongoing appraisal to ensure that staff are committed and competent in their roles to provide good-quality care. There is a comprehensive training package, and staff are up to date in most of the mandatory areas. However, only half of the staff team has up-to-date first aid training, and some courses that have been undertaken have not been recorded in the training record. The workforce plan is not sufficiently detailed, as it does not link training needs, training undertaken, and when updates are required. It is, therefore, difficult to be fully assured of the competence of staff in important areas. At times, there are insufficient staff on duty to respond flexibly to unforeseen	

circumstances. For example, one young person's risk assessment in relation to unauthorised absence requires staff to follow the young person and search the locality. If this occurs when only two staff are on duty, the home is left with only one member of staff responsible for the other five children and young people. If one member of staff is already engaged with another young person, potentially off site, the plan could not be followed without leaving the home with no staff. Although this has not had an adverse impact to date, it has the potential to do so. It also means that individual needs may not be responded to.

Partnership working is well established and effective. Other professionals talk about good communication and the passing on of relevant information. The manager is not afraid to hold other professionals to account when needed. One stakeholder said: 'Staff have been committed and call meetings to make things happen when things are not going to plan.' Parents speak very positively about the staff. Comments from parents include: 'Communication is really good. It feels like a partnership', and: 'They involve me in all decisions and keep me informed. We work together to support my child and keep her safe.' This has led to improved outcomes for children and young people.

The home's own placement plans are comprehensive, clear and up to date, giving good guidance to staff. However, the written information provided by the local authority, such as care plans and pathways plans, is not always up to date or readily available, despite the requests from the home to provide it. This shortfall has the potential to have a negative impact on the consistency of information and the subsequent quality of care, which is based on the provision of that information.

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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