

SC036917

Registered provider: Royal Borough of Greenwich

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home also undertakes outreach work to provide support to care leavers.

Inspection dates: 10 to 11 October 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 28 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Staff give high priority to creating and maintaining positive relationships with young people, and this is at the centre of the excellent practice in this home.
- Young people feel respected and listened to, and know that staff care about them.
- Young people feel very attached to the home and continue to keep in contact with staff when they move on.
- Staff work hard and successfully to support the young people, who have complex emotional and behavioural challenges.
- All the young people make significant progress from their starting points.
- Staff guide the young people effectively through bespoke independence skills training.
- Staff give young people excellent support and guidance in the home to prepare them for their lives once they leave.
- An outstanding outreach support programme enhances the safety and welfare of young people when they move to semi-independent accommodation.
- The application of research-informed practice enables the provision of consistent and sensitive individualised packages of care to the young people.
- Highly effective collaborative partnership working between staff, professionals and families is a strength of the home.
- The highly resourceful and dedicated registered manager continues to innovate and develop the service. As a result, young people's overall experiences and welfare are significantly enhanced.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The recent installation of external CCTV has not been incorporated into the home's statement of purpose and children's guide. In addition, the home does not have a CCTV policy.
- Young people's case files do not always contain the most up-to-date plans.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
08/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
29/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
29/09/2015	Full	Outstanding

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

Recommendations

- Any home using CCTV or other monitoring equipment should have a written policy describing how this will support the safeguarding and well-being of those living and working in the home in accordance with regulation 24. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.16). In particular, the written policy should be used to update the home's statement of purpose and the children's guide.
- Children's homes should be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of children, they will in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9). In particular young people's bedroom decoration should be regularly refreshed.
- All children's case records must be kept up to date. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3). In particular, children's files should contain the most up-to-date risk assessments and plans.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff at this home continue to provide an outstanding quality of care. Young people make significant progress in all aspects of their social, emotional and educational development. Staff build positive, trusting and respectful relationships with the young people. This is a significant strength and a success of the service.

Staff demonstrate that they value young people highly; liberal praise and congratulations are part of the home's daily practice. As a result, young people grow in self-confidence and self-esteem and they achieve great success, being presented with citizenship awards, growing fruit and vegetables, and training for the local football team.

Staff work tirelessly to ensure that young people's day-to-day progress is recognised and recorded. Examples such as, 'Thanks for the text back', 'You have been fantastic company', and 'It was great to hear you laughing so much' are fed back and celebrated during the young people's key work sessions. As a result, young people know that they are listened to and they feel valued.

Staff prioritise young people's education and have high expectations for them to attend school or college. Highly effective collaboration with education professionals ensures that

the right level of support and learning is provided for each young person. When education is not provided, staff successfully challenge professionals for school places or temporary home tuition. This ensures that young people's educational progress is consistently maintained. The proactive staff team also seeks out additional learning opportunities. Young people increase their overall skills, engaging in apprenticeships, voluntary work and they edit the home's newsletter. In surveys, a social worker wrote: 'Staff promote education in a variety of settings, and always support and encourage young people to look at and consider different options.'

Young people have an influential voice in the home. Their wishes and feelings are captured in quarterly questionnaires, fortnightly young people's meetings and a compliments and complaints post box. The highly resourceful registered manager keeps a young people's 'You said, we did' record. Staff swiftly action requests such as for more books, more DVDs, trips to the seaside, an upgraded games console and changing the time of the young people's meeting. As a result, care is dynamic and adaptable.

The highly creative registered manager has recently introduced an enrichment plan for the young people. Described as a 'bucket list', every young person has stated their 'once in lifetime' wishes. Ideas range from jumping in a puddle and flying a kite to climbing a tree or going to a disco. This simple but very effective idea offers young people experiences that they may never have had, further enriching their lives.

Young people receive extensive support and encouragement in all areas of their lives. Exceptionally dedicated key workers identify and respond to the young people's changing needs. Weekly key-working sessions are used effectively to identify and discuss any concerns with the young people. Keyworkers ensure that they acknowledge young people's unique progress. For example, a young person's feedback included: 'Today you blew us all away with how much hard work and thought you put into the coffee morning. Well done'. One professional said to the inspector, 'I like the way the key worker has built up a positive relationship with X.'

Young people benefit hugely from carefully planned introductory visits before living in the home. Young people read pen profiles of the staff and young people, which helps them familiarise themselves with their new home. One young person described the home as, 'Warm and welcoming, where you will be treated fairly.' Young people who have left the home contribute to the highly innovative young people's guide. Written comments include, 'It's been six years since I left the home. I wouldn't have changed a thing. I still think of all the good times I had there,' and, 'It never really felt like a children's home, we were all like a big extended family.' These remarks not only describe the home's excellent approach to care, but also provide young people with reassurance from peers and help to promote a smooth transition into the home.

The large five-bedroomed home provides a clean, bright and homely environment. Young people's bedrooms are personalised to their own tastes. Young people's privacy is respected and they have keys to their bedrooms. The home is in an excellent condition throughout. However, the decoration in one bedroom is showing signs of wear. In addition, recent damage to the bathroom ceiling caused by a water leak has yet to be

repaired. The registered manager is aware of these issues and has organised maintenance work.

The large garden provides young people with a host of activity opportunities, including the very well attended annual summer barbecue. The homely atmosphere is further enhanced with the regular inclusion of the young people's family and friends in activities and visits to the home. One young person said, 'Nothing is ever too much here. It's really welcoming and it also welcomes the family you have, and family are really important to me.'

Young people benefit from age appropriate and individualised independence skills training plans. Young people receive substantial support in preparation for independent living. Learning how to open bank accounts, manage money, make benefit applications and undertake household chores such as laundry and cooking supports young people's successful transition to independent living.

The proactive staff team provides an exceptional outreach service to young people who move to independent living. This ranges from 'keeping in touch' telephone calls to supporting young people with their accommodation and appointments. Staff remind young people when they leave, 'Just remember we are only a phone call away.' One young person said, 'They are interested in my future, and they stand by you every inch of the way.'

The registered manager's unmistakable passion in her caring role extends to young people who have left the home. She has successfully created a leavers group. Young people who have moved on return regularly to the home for events such as birthdays and other celebrations. These young people provide comments and suggestions to continually improve the service. Their suggestion to have an input into the young people's guide was acted on and has proved highly effective. One young person who has moved on from the home says, 'It's never goodbye from the home, it's always "See you later".' A young person who is due to move to independent living says, 'I will miss my home; when I leave, it will be a new beginning, but I will always be back visiting.'

A young person who left the home confirmed the excellent care and positive experiences that young people receive in the home, 'I had so many happy moments there and they are now treasured memories which I know I won't ever forget.'

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

Young people who spoke to the inspector say that they feel exceptionally safe and protected at the home from all types of harm. The registered manager and staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of the risks facing each young person. Sexual health, sexual exploitation and online safety are routinely discussed in an open and trusting environment with the young people. Very clear risk management plans and effective strategies help to reduce any risk of harm. In most cases, risk assessments provide staff with clear guidance on the best way to keep young people safe. However, in one instance, a young person's file did not contain the most up-to-date risk

assessment. This shortfall did not place the young person at risk of harm.

The excellent work of the staff team ensures that young people make significant progress in reducing their highly risky behaviours. This includes young people with histories of going missing from care and being at risk of sexual exploitation and substance misuse. A young person said, 'I feel safe here, staff show me and tell me about dangers and how to keep myself safe.'

The registered manager conducts rigorous impact risk assessments at the point of referral. This allows for a meticulous planning process during which the needs of all of the young people living in the home are considered, to ensure that they are appropriately matched.

The staff keep close links with the safer neighbourhood police team. The police team visits the home on an informal basis and provides young people with helpful advice and guidance. These visits help to develop positive relationships and allow for open discussion between the young people in a safe environment. This helps young people learn how to keep themselves safe in the community.

Physical restraint is rarely used in the home. There has only been one incident of restraint in the past year. Young people are considerably well supported to reflect on their challenging behaviours with a 'my thinking report'. This gives each young person a meaningful process to consider alternative ways to manage their negative behaviour.

During their introduction to the home, staff ensure that young people know how to keep safe in the community. For example, staff ensure that young people have mobile phone credit and travel cards. These provide additional safeguards when young people are out of the home. Young people are encouraged to telephone home when they may feel vulnerable in the community. An inventive approach involving young people being given a unique 'safe word' to alert staff if they find themselves in trouble ensures that staff can respond swiftly to the young people's needs. This approach increases young people's safety.

The registered manager and staff actively promote equality for all young people in their care. This extends beyond the home. During the home's annual summer holiday, one young person experienced discriminatory behaviour from the holiday company staff. The registered manager and staff challenged the discriminatory practice and ensured that the young person's complaint was recorded and addressed with the holiday company without delay.

Robust staff recruitment procedures are in place. The registered manager and the local authority conduct appropriate checks on all staff before they start work at the home. All safety equipment is in place in the home and regular compliance checks are carried out. Fire drills are undertaken with the young people present, to ensure that they are familiar with the actions required.

Recently, a young person's bicycle was stolen from outside the home. To increase

security, the police advised the installation of external CCTV. The CCTV has now been installed, but there is not yet a policy on its purpose, and the statement of purpose and young people's guide have not been updated.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leadership and management of this home are exceptional. The registered manager is a highly skilled and knowledgeable practitioner. She is a qualified social worker with many years' experience in childcare practice. The registered manager's continual professional development, including participation in professional forums, continues to enhance this service. The registered manager shares knowledge and excellent practice with other providers and local authority projects. She is strongly of the view that, 'Where there is good practice, then we should share it.' This is evident in the home's newly updated behaviour management plans, using learning from another provider. The registered manager has recently achieved a 'highly commended' award in the local authority manager of year competition.

Fortnightly staff team meetings, combined with case management meetings and staff handovers, are very effective. Staff are meticulous in their practice. They routinely consider and share information on the progress of young people. This means that care plans are dynamic and constantly updated to ensure that they meet the changing needs of the young people. The highly effective practice of staff is always underpinned by the ethos 'Are we doing everything we can possibly do for this young person?' One professional from another agency describes the registered manager and staff team as 'committed and passionate'. Another professional praises the registered manager and staff team, 'The manager has made the home an excellent place for children looked after, and has got an excellent team.'

The registered manager and staff team actively encourage young people's sense of ownership and participation in the running of their home. With the young people's consent, prospective foster carers attend coffee mornings at the home to learn from young people's care experiences. The young people bake cakes and contribute to discussions in an open and honest atmosphere.

The staff team works in a highly effective partnership with other professionals. For example, the registered manager actively arranges professionals meetings with mental health services alongside education providers to co-ordinate help and support for young people. One professional describes the registered manager and staff team's care as, 'Going above and beyond to help young people.'

Staff training is exceptionally thorough. Mandatory training is comprehensive. Bespoke training such as 'transition to adulthood' and 'having difficult conversations' ensures that staff are well equipped to support the young people in their care. A member of staff said, 'We are young people-focused: nurturing and enabling them to be the best they can be.'

The drive and passion of the registered manager and staff to improve the lives of young

people in their care are enduring. A member of staff sums this up, 'I am just as enthusiastic today as the first day I started. I love what this home stands for.'

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: SC036917

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Children's Services, The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, London SE18 6HQ

Responsible individual: Bryan Edmands

Registered manager: Deborah Forde

Inspector

Victoria Jones, social care inspector

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