

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC037762
Inspector	Stephen Collett
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Portsmouth City Council
Registered person address	Portsmouth City Council Civic Offices, Guildhall Square PORTSMOUTH PO1 2BG
Responsible individual	Stephen Kitchman
Registered manager	Calvin Stuart George
Date of last inspection	14/01/2014

Inspection date	03/12/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The home provides a good quality of care, and young people benefit from having personalised placement plans. Although the recording of progress against the goals set for young people is not consistently recorded, this has not impacted negatively on the progress young people make. The majority of young people make good progress in many aspects of their lives, and those who remain at the home for a significant period experience improved outcomes.

An experienced and committed staff team ensure young people receive consistency of care, which is underpinned by clear boundaries and expectations. Staff are skilled at promoting young people's safety, and recognise young people's individual vulnerabilities and associated risks. Young people report that they feel safe in the home, and although they may not always respond positively to the rules of the home, they accept that these are fair. Young people are given excellent opportunities to express their views on the care they receive, and feel able to share their views with management and staff.

Although young people have good access to a range of external support agencies, they do not always respond positively to the advice and support they are given, particularly in relation to health matters. Insufficient progress has been made in relation to high levels of substance misuse, and this could have an overall negative

impact on the progress young people make in the future.

The home is pro-active in addressing the issue of young people who go missing from care, and have had some significant success in supporting young people to reduce their missing episodes. Practice could be improved in relation to the use of sanctions and the recording of missing episodes.

The home benefits from being managed well and having an experienced team of staff. The Registered Manager has a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home, and was familiar with many of the areas for development, identified by the inspection. Improvement to monitoring reports and closer scrutiny of staff training records are needed to ensure leadership and management remains effective in the home.

As a result of this inspection, two requirements and five recommendations are made, to address identified shortfalls and further develop good practice.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a purpose-built children's home run by the local authority that operates as a reception and assessment centre. The home is registered to accommodate seven young people of either gender between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/01/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
22/04/2013	Full	adequate
18/12/2012	Interim	good progress
16/07/2012	Full	adequate

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made which includes the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; specifically, implement a system for formally recording the effectiveness of all sanctions, particularly in relation to sanctions applied for going missing. (Regulation 17B (3) (f))	16/02/2015
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in schedule 6 at least once in every 3 months and supply to HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted by him for the purposes of	16/02/2015

	paragraph (1). (Regulation 34 (1) (2))	
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Recommendations

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

- children's physical and emotional and social development needs are promoted; specifically, ensure creative approaches are used to support young people to reduce and refrain from using cannabis. (NMS 6.1)
- provide a comfortable and homely environment that is well maintained and decorated. (NMS 10.3)
- contribute effectively to each child's placement plan review; specifically, ensure that placement plans are regularly reviewed and amended if necessary, and that progress towards goals and targets is recorded. (NMS 25.3)
- ensure records kept by the home when a child goes missing detail the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given by the child for running away from the home, and any action taken in the light of those reasons; specifically, when a young person refuses an independent return home interview, ensure that conversations staff have with the young person about the missing episode are recorded as a return home interview. (NMS 5.10)
- ensure there is a good quality learning and development programme which staff are supported to undertake; in particular, ensure staff attend mandatory refresher courses when these are due. (NMS 18.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

The home provides a stable environment for young people who have experienced significant disruption. This stability results in many young people experiencing increased self-confidence and emotional resilience, and the majority of young people making good progress in many aspects of their lives. A social worker commented that one young person has felt 'emotionally safe' for the first time, since moving to the home.

Many of the young people have a history of poor engagement with education, and this has impacted negatively on their ability to perform consistently well in post sixteen education and training. However, all young people are motivated to engage with professionals to identify appropriate courses. Some young people have made excellent progress on college courses and overcome significant disadvantages.

Young people are familiar with the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, and some take the opportunity to engage in sporting and leisure activities that provide good exercise. Young people often cook for themselves and other residents, and this is teaching them how to maintain a healthy, balanced diet. In other key areas of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, young people's progress is not consistent. Many young people have not responded positively to the support they receive to give up smoking or refrain from using cannabis. Managers and staff have taken some initial steps in engaging substance misuse services to help young people address this issue, but cannabis use amongst young people remains high.

Young people who remain at the home for significant periods, often show a reduction in the frequency and seriousness of offending and anti-social behaviour. There has been an overall decrease in the number of aggressive incidents perpetrated by young people in the home, and an officer from the youth offending team commented that one young person has significantly reduced offending behaviour since being admitted.

All young people engage well with external agencies who provide support in preparation for independent living, and they actively participate in decision making processes which affect their day to day lives. Some young people also participate in forums, such as the Children in Care Council, to address the wider issues affecting the children in care/care leaver population. This enables these young people to develop core skills which could benefit their future career prospects.

The home focuses on preparing young people for independence, and many young people develop skills which will benefit them when moving on to semi-independent or independent accommodation. Inevitably, some young people become disillusioned with this process, and progress is not always consistent. However, a strength of the home is that outreach support can be provided to young people moving on, and

young people who do not succeed at their first attempt at independence are often able to return to the home so that more preparation work can be undertaken.

Quality of care

good

The home is located in an urban area on the outskirts of a city, and all amenities are within easy travelling distance. Young people live in a large, purpose built house, which provides sufficient room and facilities for communal living. Some areas of the home are in need of redecoration, and some of the furnishings are worn and damaged. This means that the home is not as welcoming and homely as it could be.

Young people benefit from having positive relationships with staff, who demonstrate a commitment to promoting the wellbeing of the young people. Interactions between staff and young people were seen to be warm, friendly and relaxed, with staff maintaining appropriate boundaries when young people's behaviour became more challenging. The Registered Manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of individual staff members, and identifies any who need to develop more positive interactions with young people.

All young people have placement plans and life skills work books which focus on developing their preparation for independence. These documents do not always record what progress the young person has made towards their goals, or how and when the plan is reviewed. Consequently, the changing needs of young people are not always effectively tracked, and this could result in young people's development needs not being identified.

Young people are given opportunities to significantly influence the running of the home, and recent discussions have resulted in changes to young people's bedtime routines, and the availability of meals and snacks. Young people also contribute towards staff annual appraisals, and their views are taken into account and responded to. Plans are being made for representatives from the Children in Care Council to attend young people's house meetings, to further enhance the ethos of giving young people a voice.

Staff work effectively with local authority agencies, to ensure young people are given opportunities to enrol on suitable education and training courses. Careers advisors maintain a regular presence in the home and work with young people on an individual basis to identify their learning and training needs. Education and training feature in young people's life skills work books and independence plans, and opportunities are discussed in key work sessions. The principles of key working are firmly embedded in practice at the home, and this ensures young people consistently feel staff are concerned for their welfare.

The home is highly effective at working in partnership with other agencies to ensure young people can access external professional support. Regular consultation takes place with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, ensuring referrals are made in a timely manner and staff have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on young people's challenging behaviours. Consequently, young people benefit from being cared for by staff who can respond appropriately to distress, anxiety and trauma.

Staff also work effectively with the youth offending service, the police, independent advocacy and voluntary organisations who provide services to address young people going missing and at risk of sexual exploitation.

Young people are given information on how to complain, and how to contact a range of external agencies providing support and guidance to young people. When young people make a complaint they are provided with a written response and guidance on how to progress unresolved issues. It was noted that in one case, a young person's complaint in relation to not having wi fi in the home, had not yet resulted in the promised installation of this facility.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people report that generally, they feel safe in the home and they could identify an adult they would speak to if they had concerns.

Positive behaviour is encouraged by setting goals and providing incentives to achieve these. Clear and consistent boundaries are in place, and staff are skilled in using de-escalation techniques in response to challenging behaviour. There has been a recent decrease in the use of sanctions to address unacceptable behaviour, and the Registered Manager acknowledges that the high use of sanctions earlier in the year was not achieving positive results.

Although the use of sanctions is discussed by management and staff, there is currently no formal process for reviewing and recording the effectiveness of sanctions, and young people's views on the sanction applied are not consistently obtained. Practice around the use of sanctions has not been developed to ensure behaviour management strategies are consistent and effective. Sanctions have been given to young people as a consequence of them going missing from the home, and the Registered Manager acknowledges that this is not effective practice to reduce missing episodes.

The home adopts a 'hands off' approach to behaviour management, and young people are rarely restrained. An incident occurred earlier this year when a member of staff sought to restrain a young person inappropriately. The incident was appropriately referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer for investigation, and

it was concluded that the matter would be resolved through supervision and training for the member of staff concerned. Subsequently, work was undertaken with the young person and the member of staff, in order to rebuild a positive relationship.

Management and staff are familiar with the risks young people face when they go missing from the home and are vigilant to any indicators that a young person may be at risk of sexual exploitation. Processes are in place to monitor emerging missing patterns for individual young people, and this process has resulted in multi-agency strategy meetings taking place to ensure the young person's safety.

When young people do go missing, staff follow agreed protocols and take a pro-active approach to locating the young person. The home also undertakes preventative work, and has successfully engaged young people, their friends and families in making arrangements for young people to have authorised overnight stays with friends and so reduce the need for young people to leave the home without permission. The home's commitment to addressing the risks associated with missing and sexual exploitation is further demonstrated by the commissioning of a national voluntary organisation to undertake independent return home interviews and specialist support to young people affected by sexual exploitation.

Despite taking this pro-active approach, some young people refuse to engage in return home interviews with the specialist workers. When this happens, staff invariably discuss the missing episode with the young person concerned, but this is often not recorded. As a result, important information to safeguard young people cannot be fully monitored and evaluated.

Staff are familiar with the vulnerabilities of individual young people, and closely monitor group interactions for any sign of bullying. Any bullying concerns that do emerge are quickly addressed, and where necessary, other professionals working with young people are consulted in an effort to resolve conflict. The home's anti-bullying policy is regularly reviewed and amended to ensure it is an effective tool for addressing the issue.

Robust recruitment procedures are in place, to minimise the risk of unsuitable individuals being employed in the home, and staff performance is monitored through regular supervision and annual appraisal. The home provides a physically safe environment for young people, and sufficient staff are employed to ensure their safety and security while in the home.

Leadership and management

good

The home has an experienced Registered Manager, who has been in post for over three years. The manager holds the diploma in social work and a degree in leadership and management. There is an experienced and settled staff team in place, who feel well supported by leaders and managers. All requirements and

recommendations from previous inspections have been acted upon, and the home provides services in accordance with the aims and objectives of the home's statement of purpose.

The Registered Manager and staff demonstrate a good understanding of the needs of the young people placed in the home, and take steps to identify and understand the cultural needs of minority young people, particularly asylum seeking young people, who are occasionally placed at the home in an emergency. The Registered Manager is familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of the home, and has a development plan in place. This plan reiterates an intention to maintain good practice, but also focuses on developments that would improve practice and opportunities for young people to achieve improved outcomes.

Staff receive regular supervision and are also able to consult practitioners from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service for advice and guidance in relation to their direct work with young people. Staff are able to access a comprehensive range of training opportunities, although not all staff keep up to date with mandatory training refresher courses, including safeguarding training. In addition, some staff have not yet completed child sexual exploitation training. In order to ensure young people are cared for by skilled and knowledgeable practitioners, steps should be taken to ensure training for all staff is kept up to date.

Performance monitoring mechanisms are in place, and regulation 33 visits take within required timescales. There is a bureaucratic process for having these reports signed off and forwarded to Ofsted, resulting in minor delays to these reports being received. The current format used for completing regulation 34 monitoring reports does not provide information or analysis as required by the regulation, and these reports have not been sent to Ofsted.

The home maintains excellent working relationships with other agencies, and pro-actively engages specialist resources to ensure young people have access to a range of services to meet their needs. Social workers report that communication with management and staff is highly effective, and this enables informed and consistent planning based on the individual circumstances of young people.

Health and safety requirements are met, and the Registered Manager monitors the frequency of checks on equipment and the regularity of fire drills. Consequently, any shortcomings are identified and rectified.

Any concerns about the protection of young people are quickly identified and reported to the appropriate authorities. The Registered Manager consults the Local Authority Designated Officer regarding any concerns over staff practice, in order that appropriate action can be taken. As a result, staff attend relevant training where it has been identified that individual practice needs developing, but there can occasionally be minor delays in this training being delivered.

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.