

SC038780

Registered provider: Blue Mountain Homes Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and provides care to four young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 May 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 13 December 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 manager is very committed to young people and leads the staff team well to provide good-quality care.
- After an unsettled period, the home is going from strength to strength.

- The good-quality care makes a positive difference to young people. They feel cared about and develop a sense of belonging.
- Young people who have very challenging behaviour when they come to the home respond very well to a nurturing approach. They learn how to talk about their problems and how to accept the help that they need.
- Young people have all reduced their high-risk behaviours. They go missing less, and their drug taking and violent behaviour is reducing.
- All young people are in education, despite some having struggled to attend and achieve in the past.
- Young people benefit from the high-quality time that staff spend with them. Key-working sessions work very effectively, and young people engage extremely well with staff.

The children's home's areas for development:

- There are some shortfalls, which include some management tasks such as formal monitoring of the home, formal staff supervision and induction records for new staff. However, the manager is aware of the shortfalls and has plans in place to address them.
- When restraints are used, young people are not routinely asked for their view of how this felt or whether staff carried out the measure properly.
- Some young people have been able to have a very positive ending to their placement. However, young people who move to a secure setting do not get the same opportunity to say goodbye. This could mean that they will not be able to reflect positively on their time at the home in the future.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/12/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
17/08/2016	Full	Good
18/02/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
19/05/2015	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 registered person must establish a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45(2)(a))	30/05/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that staff help each child to prepare for any moves from the home. This is in relation to ensuring that when young people have to move to secure placements they can still have a positive ending at the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27).
- Ensure that any child who has been restrained is given the opportunity to express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicable, ideally within 24 hours of the restraint incident. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.60).
- Ensure that the recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks. This is in particular relation to induction records and formal staff supervision. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1).

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

All young people are developing well in many areas. Young people's comments about the home included: 'This home is alright', and, 'It is good'. Staff all agreed that young people are making good progress. Care planning is individual, and young people are always central to decisions made concerning them. They have many opportunities to express their views about their day-to-day care, including through young people's meetings and individual key-working sessions. When young people's suggestions cannot be carried out, they are always given an explanation. Time is spent with young people, ironing out their concerns before they become big issues.

Young people who live away from their own community are well supported to stay in touch with people who are important to them. Young people who struggle to accept their complex family situation, and the reasons for being in care, have a very high level of support to come to terms with what has happened to them. The manager and her staff team make every effort to ensure that young people are listened to by other professionals about who they wish to be in contact with. During the inspection, it was observed that the manager organised a contact for a young person through the placing authority and shared in the young person's happiness and satisfaction about the outcome. One-to-one sessions and a high level of support are given to ensure that young people can make sense of their situation and are well supported through difficult periods in their life.

Young people all have someone who they can talk to openly about their feelings. They reported that they get on well with some staff members more than others, but they praised most staff for their positive relationships and support. Staff have an exceptionally kind and thoughtful approach to young people. One staff member said: 'I want to be there for him, and always stop what I am doing if he needs me.' The way that staff speak about young people suggests that young people are cherished. Management monitors staff members' relationships with young people well. Adjustments are made to the rota to promote positive relationships for young people on each shift.

Staff are creative about key working, which is proactive as well as taking place after incidents occur. Staff are skilled and know how to have more difficult conversations with young people. This means that serious issues are tackled 'head on', rather than skirting around the issues. This honest and frank approach helps young people to learn about socially acceptable behaviour and about how their behaviour impacts others. One staff member spoke about their work on behaviour management. They talked about the importance of building young people's confidence and self-esteem for the future, saying: 'He is confident, but still so young. We will build him up with time and experience.' Planning for when young people move from the home into adult services continues at a pace which is right for the individual, to ensure that the young person is ready for adulthood.

Young people all attend education. Some young people have struggled to attend in the past, but their bespoke education package meets their needs well, encouraging them to get back into education and learning as soon as possible. Staff go to great lengths to work with schools to provide a clear and consistent approach to learning and behaviour. During the inspection, the inspector observed a conversation that staff had with a teaching professional to help to remove barriers to a young person's learning, which was very positive and instrumental to the young person's progress.

Young people enjoy their education and are always supported and encouraged in everything they do. They feel happy with opportunities for activities in their free time. Those with limited free time understand why this is so. Young people enjoy their time with staff and each other, engaging in trampolining, going to the gym and other community-based facilities.

There is careful planning when young people are admitted, and placement matching is thorough to ensure that they can make good progress from the start. When young people leave, this is very often managed well. When a young person recently left, staff 'went the extra mile' to ensure that they had the chance to say goodbye and to positively reflect on their time at the home. They drove for four hours each way to pick the young person up and bring them back to the home for an evening. A memory box included good wishes and kind messages from staff, photographs and memorabilia. This was given to the young person as a gift. This thoughtful approach gives young people the message that they are highly valued and helps them to reflect on the good times, during a period which was hard for them. However, for a young person who recently moved to a secure setting directly from his court hearing, not enough effort went into planning how that young person could say goodbye. Consequently, he will not be able to reflect so positively, and young people may feel devalued and uncared for in the future if this is not put right.

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

Young people are safe and feel safe. Young people spoken with during the inspection reported that they go missing less, have fewer issues relating to drugs and alcohol and have fewer violent outbursts. Because there is less risk-taking behaviour, staff have been able to concentrate on other issues, such as how to manage young people's emotional responses to being away from their families. Young people's overall welfare is positively influenced by staff because young people are getting and accepting the help and support that they need.

When young people have been missing, staff have done everything they can to look for them and to work with other professionals, such as the police, to find them as quickly as possible. Staff always work hard with young people after they have been missing, to gather information and to help them to understand risks. This has positively influenced young people's safety because their episodes of missing have reduced.

Despite young people presenting with some challenging behaviour, staff remain positive. They support young people through times of crisis by being calm, patient, understanding and supportive. This approach reduces the need for staff to physically intervene. Despite high levels of challenging behaviour, there have only been two very low-level and short restraints since the last inspection. Young people have lots of opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and talk about their incidents with staff. This helps them to develop more socially acceptable behaviour and to manage their anxieties and emotions better. However, young people have not been asked for their opinion about how restraint was undertaken by staff. This is a missed opportunity to further monitor staff members' performance in behaviour management.

Leaders and staff are knowledgeable about what they must do to protect young people, and staff receive a range of training. This training has had a positive impact because where mistakes had been made, which were identified at the last inspection, lessons have been learned. Staff now clearly understand the home's policies and procedures. There is a clear document trail of when incidents have happened and how staff have progressed the issues with other professionals. Risk assessments are instrumental in young people's progress because all risks are clearly set out for staff to fully understand. Steps that staff must take to protect young people are clear. Young people's welfare is fully protected because staff are fully briefed with the most up-to-date, important information.

There is a well-managed recruitment procedure with several layers of quality assurance to reduce the risk of unsuitable staff working with the young people. There are also well-managed health and safety procedures, and the home remains a safe and pleasant place for young people to live, adding to the improvement of young people's self-esteem.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is suitably experienced, having worked in children's homes for many years. She is currently working towards the diploma in leadership and management. The manager has a lovely relationship with young people. She is kind, caring and comforting to a group of boys who respond well to her approach. Young people know her well because she is very involved in day-to-day practice. They feel confident that she is always there for them and think that she does her best for them. Their comments included: 'Lisa is a good manager,' and 'Lisa helps us to make sense of everything.' Indeed, she keeps them all at the heart of her everyday practice and decisions, sharing in their achievements and leading the work to guide them with their difficulties. This strong manager is supported by an effective deputy manager, and together they provide highly effective leadership to the staff team and young people.

Managers reflected that, since the last inspection, there had been a lot of changes which had been difficult. For example, there have been several significant changes to the staff team, including a change in deputy manager. The newly established team is developing well. One staff member reported: 'There is a good combination on shifts of new staff' There are some shortfalls, but these have had a very minimal impact on young people.

Some staff have not received regular formal supervision, and staff members' performance has not been formally monitored, particularly in the case of new staff, although this is now up to date. Staff inductions are not routinely recorded, and therefore induction practice could 'slip'. While it is very clear that the registered manager knows her home and the young people inside out, she has not ensured that she has completed formal monitoring in line with the regulations. All these issues could negatively impact on young people in the future if they are not put right. The manager accepts that this has been a very busy period and is already fully aware of the issues raised in this inspection, knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the home well.

The two requirements and the one recommendation made at the last inspection regarding safeguarding are met, and this has positively impacted on the safety and welfare of young people. The manager has ensured that procedures in the home are routinely followed, which has positively influenced young people's safety. There have been many other improvements since the last inspection, demonstrating that the home is going from strength to strength. There is a new quality assurance process, and the manager is actively seeking the views of other professionals about the quality of the home's work. Also, new staff have been appointed and there are changes to paperwork. These changes include a more organised approach to care planning and risk assessments. There has been a revision to the community-based risk assessment to include new and more up-to-date information about crimes in the area. These changes have already positively impacted on young people. For example, where the community risk assessment has shown an increase in gang culture in the local area, staff have completed training to identify issues and support young people to stay away from gangs, helping to protect them from such risks.

Staff were very keen to comment on their training, saying, 'It is great.' They are fully able to reflect on how this helps them in their work. Staff spoke about how recent training in mental health has helped them to understand how young people must find it difficult to manage stress and anxiety and how this manifests itself. While not every member of staff has done every course, there is a very good balance on each shift of trained staff. The manager also reported positively about how recent training has helped her in her role. For example, during recent training on 'inspirational leadership', she has learned new ways of mentoring different staff.

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 difference 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 who 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: SC038780

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Blue Mountain Homes Ltd

Registered provider address: Flat 17, Leeland Mansions, Leeland Road, London W13 9HE

Responsible individual: Pradeep Manaktala

Registered manager: Lisa Owens

Inspector(s)

Caroline Brailsford, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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