

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	07/12/2016
Unique reference number	SC042147
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Child First Limited
Registered provider address	c/o, 40 Oxford Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 1UT

Responsible individual	Terry Goble
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Jennie Christopher

Inspection date	07/12/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC042147

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- The home does not have a clear policy on when to contact the police to ensure that incidents do not escalate out of staff's reasonable control. It is not clear when young people should be held accountable for injuries that they have caused to others.
- Records do not consistently show when parents have been called regarding incidents of unacceptable behaviour or when their child is missing. They also do not detail when parents have made it clear that they do not want to be contacted regarding their child's behaviour and conduct. This has led to some confusion.
- The home currently has no registered manager. The post has been vacant since May 2016. The home is being managed by a suitably qualified manager, who has forwarded their application to be registered with Ofsted.

The children's home strengths

- Despite there being no registered manager, the home is being well run by an experienced home manager and service manager. They both hold relevant qualifications and have several years' experience of managing good children's homes.
- Young people have some extremely strong relationships with staff. They all identify someone to whom they would go if they were worried or upset. Staff take time to listen to young people and help them to work through issues and concerns and to consider positive responses to their anxiety or distress.
- Young people are making progress in most areas of their lives, including working towards attending education full time, despite their being out of education for extended periods of time prior to their placements.
- There have been a high number of incidents of young people being missing or engaging in anti-social behaviour with others from the local community. Staff have been proactive in liaising with partner agencies to identify particular individuals in the neighbourhood who are impacting negatively on those who live in the home.

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

Recommendations

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

- Homes should develop and maintain effective working relationships with local youth justice and police services where children in their care have targets to achieve in reducing offending or socially unacceptable behaviour. This is in relation to producing a policy on when police intervention should be sought. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 38, paragraph 8.5)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. This relates to recording when parents have been contacted, including when staff have been unsuccessful. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/04/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/09/2016	Full	Good
26/05/2015	Full	Inadequate
27/01/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
Young people have some extremely positive relationships with staff. Those who have been in placement for a long period speak fondly of staff. It is clear that their relationships have developed, and the staff are nurturing young people well. Those who are newer to the home all have staff with whom they have bonded and identify those they would go to if they were worried or upset. They also noted staff with whom they like to spend time. Those who are new to the home are welcomed and helped to form strong bonds. The home works closely with placing authorities to make placements a success and undertakes sound pre-placement assessments, to ensure that young people's needs can be met in the group. In some instances, local authority placement plans have changed after young people have come to live in the home, which has led to destabilisation and the young people feeling unsure of their futures, resulting in placements unexpectedly ending. Staff are keen to listen to young people and are interested in their views and ideas. Young people are encouraged to share their views through group meetings and general discussion. A comprehensive key-working programme has been developed. Key-work sessions are tailored to young people's individual needs. Young people are not restricted to working with their key workers, and sessions can be undertaken with a range of staff. This means that young people's needs can be responded to quickly and that working relationships between young people and staff have improved. Young people additionally have access to independent visitors and advocates when these are available via their placing authorities. The home has links with independent services in the community to ensure that young people always have someone to talk to. No young people are currently attending education full time. Each young person has an allocated tutor. Staff liaise effectively with virtual headteachers and education professionals in placing authorities. They also work closely with schools and alternative providers to help with behaviour and motivation, to make education a positive experience for young people. Young people are offered socially and emotionally stimulating activities, such as horse riding and equine therapy, music lessons, ballet and football training, to supplement their formal education. Staff actively encourage young people to attend, with varying degrees of success. However, lack of confidence and the pull from inappropriate friends in the local community sometimes prevents young people from taking part. Young people are encouraged to understand healthy living and what this means for them. They have access to fresh foods, and there is limited use of prepared meals	

in the home. Young people engage in activities such as going to the gym, and smoking is discouraged. The home has links with specialist services should a young person misuse alcohol or other substances. Additionally, the young people have ready access to sexual health services. Emotional well-being is actively promoted, and the home employs a psychologist who undertakes evaluations of young people and guides staff in the consistent management of young people's emotional and behavioural needs. Medications are stored safely, and there are robust systems in place for the administration of medication.

Young people are encouraged to behave in a socially acceptable manner. The staff's approach to behaviour management has become increasingly restorative, with a focus on the whole child, rather than just the behaviour displayed. Staff are working more cohesively, but there are some who need to develop their understanding of the approach further. Staff evaluate trends and patterns in behaviour and have linked some episodes in one young person to changes in medication. The behaviour management policy is clear on what is expected, although it does not detail at what point the police should be called to prevent situations from escalating beyond staff's control. Concerns that staff have previously called the police for minor incidents are sometimes preventing them from seeking their assistance when situations warrant it. The home is keen not to criminalise young people, and is now successful in this area. Close working with the youth offending team has ensured that those on orders are working through them well and adhering to their plans.

Young people are treated with dignity and respect. They are able to express themselves and to explore their identities beyond their ethnicity or religion. Staff encourage young people to express their individuality through their music and clothing. When young people are exposed to gang or drug cultures, the staff team helps them to understand the reasons for their interest and to develop protective strategies. Young people are supported to spend time with their families and friends, in line with agreed arrangements, and staff often travel long distances to facilitate contact.

Young people are supported to learn skills for adulthood, dependent on their age and abilities. They are shown how to plan meals, cook and budget and to learn how to clean and maintain a domestic setting. Those approaching adulthood work through a programme designed to prepare them for living independently, which includes how to set up utilities and pay bills.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people said that they feel safe in the home. They approach staff and are confident in their company. Staff are aware of all young people's individual vulnerabilities and do all that they can to protect them. They are confident in the procedures to follow should they believe a young person to be at risk, or if they witness inappropriate conduct of staff. Investigations into child protection and safeguarding concerns are robust, and incidents are reported to safeguarding teams in the local authority. Responses are robust, and consideration is given to what can be learned from the incident. Young people go missing, some on a regular basis. Staff respond by searching for them in the local area, and by contacting the police in line with plans agreed with the placing authority. Staff are acutely aware of the risk that young people may face when their whereabouts are unknown, and have placed themselves at risk by following young people to risky locations. Risks posed by the local community are well known. The home has good links with specialist police and meets regularly with a multi-agency group regarding local risk and reduction strategies. Young people's risk assessments are reflective of local concerns, while allowing young people to engage in appropriate activities. The location assessment identifies concerns and risks posed by the community and actions that the home can take, in partnership with police, to reduce these. Anti-social behaviour by a group of local adolescents and young adults has had a negative impact on young people living in the home. Young people have been encouraged to go missing and engage in anti-social behaviour. Staff have been proactive in working with police and making changes to the home's environment to manage these issues. Recently, some of the local young people have been moved, and this has already led to young people engaging with staff and not going missing. Staff recognise that young people explore some of their emotions through unwanted behaviour. Changes in approach to negative incidents have led to a significant decrease in the use of restraint. Staff consider the young person as a whole and in relation to their history and the current issues that they are facing. The police have been called to the home to help to manage behaviour that is beyond the reasonable expectations of staff to manage. Young people have access to the internet via the home wi-fi, which has appropriate access limitations. Staff recognise that young people are able to access the internet via their mobile phone data packages, so educate young people on the potential risk of this through key-work sessions. Bullying is not raised as an issue in the home, but staff are acutely aware of dynamics within the group, and challenge what they perceive as imbalances in relationships.	

Young people are protected from avoidable risks through regular checks of the building and fire-fighting equipment. Staff recruitment follows safer recruitment guidelines, and pre-employment checks are robust.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
The home has been without a registered manager since May 2016. As this is in excess of a 26-week period, the leadership and management of the home are judged as inadequate. However, the home is now being managed very well by a manager with several years' experience of managing other homes. He has submitted his application to be registered with Ofsted. Along with the service manager, he is shifting the culture in the home from focusing purely on behaviour, to considering the whole person and how young people's previous experiences impact on them now. The home provides the service set out in the statement of purpose. Staff understand their roles and how to meet the aims and objectives. The approach has become increasingly child centred, and stability in staffing has allowed this to be further developed. Staff said that they are well supported by the management team, and have regular supervision. They feel able to approach managers with any ideas or concerns and know that they will be listened to. Regular team meetings with a psychologist also allow them to explore how best to care for young people. The manager regularly reviews the quality of care and determines any trends and patterns, evaluating the effectiveness of plans in place for young people. They scrutinise where placements have failed and challenge the placing authority if they feel that changes in plans are not in the young people's best interests. The managers have effective links with various partner agencies and attend regular meetings regarding young people. They recognise when they are struggling to meet a young person's needs, and the manager convenes meetings to discuss how to move forward, or to identify whether another placement may be more suited to the young person's needs. Managers utilise the evaluative reports produced by the independent visitor in line with regulation 44, and these, along with their six-monthly reviews, inform the development plan. They identify areas of improvement in the home, the care of young people and areas for development for staff. There have been complaints to the home from neighbours, and the management	

team has responded swiftly to these. Relationships are improving, and it is recognised that it is not always the young people from the home who are causing the issues in the neighbourhood.

Records in the home have been streamlined to avoid repetition. They are clearer and provide an accurate account of the young person's experiences in the home. All incidents are notified to the appropriate partner agencies. However, parents commented that they do not always know when their children have been involved in an incident or been missing. Scrutiny of records shows that it is not always accurately recorded and that it is not evidenced when parents have told staff that they do not wish to be contacted.

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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