

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC042147
Inspector	Jennie Christopher
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Child First Limited
Registered person address	Child First Ltd PO Box 2050 Steyning West Sussex BN44 3XQ
Responsible individual	Terry Goble
Registered manager	POST VACANT
Date of last inspection	17/12/2013

Inspection date	12/08/2014
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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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Young people enjoy very good relationships with staff, who support them to take small steps towards making significant progress in their lives. Young people feel staff listen to them and act on their views and ideas when possible. Young people learn to build positive attachments with staff, their families and each other in a safe environment. Young people's behaviour suggests they feel safe in the home and recognise that staff are concerned for them. Staff have formed effective working relationships with parents, education providers and specialist services to ensure increasingly consistent approaches to care and planning.

Young people are involved in consultation and service development through group meetings and individual sessions. Changes as a result have included daily reward money and input into the lounge décor, design and layout.

The home currently does not have a Registered Manager. However the appointed manager and two deputies effectively run the home. The team recognise the strengths and weaknesses within the home and the new manager is evaluating current processes and procedures. Development plans identify areas for improvement in the fabric of the building and quality of care provided. Staff feel they are well trained and supported through regular supervision.

Areas identified as requiring improvement as a result of this inspection are: including more information on individual identity in care plans; further training in recognising and preventing bullying; improving the physical environment and providing clarity in records.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a private organisation. It is registered to accommodate up to six young people of either gender who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home aims to support young people to return to family, move to foster carers or to move on to independent accommodation. The organisation has its own school which is registered with the Department for Education.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/12/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
26/06/2013	Full	good
16/10/2012	Interim	good progress
19/07/2012	Full	inadequate

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

Recommendations

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

- ensure care plans fully reflect all aspects of young people's individual identity (NMS 2.1)
- ensure staff in the home are trained to recognise and deal with any indications or incidents of bullying, to act proactively and intervene positively, engaging with those who bully as well as those who are bullied (NMS 3.12)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated, including removal of mould and mildew in bathrooms (NMS 10.3)
- ensure information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the

future. With specific regard to ease with which information recorded in different documents can be accessed. (NMS 22.5)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people make some good progress as a result of living in the home. Those who have had previous multiple placement breakdowns have the opportunity to emotionally grow and feel valued by staff, regardless of how long this process takes. A social worker commented they felt the home 'would not give up' on the young person they had placed there. Young people have support to understand their personal history which lead to them being in care. They are able to explore who they are as an individual and as a result, young people develop an improved self-view.

Young people start to build healthy attachments with staff and peers, providing a stable base to form appropriate relationships in the future. Additionally, young people are encouraged and supported to maintain relationships with people important to them. This has included remaining in contact with former foster carers, who have in turn become independent visitors for young people and regular contact with family members.

Young people are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and understand what this means for them. Meals are mostly home made using fresh ingredients and a range of healthy snacks are available to young people. Young people are supported to join in physical activities, including memberships to the local gym and playing ball games in the garden. Some young people do smoke or misuse substances; however external support agencies, including the Looked After Children nurse, are actively involved with individuals to encourage cessation. As a result, young people who have been chronically using substances have within the last few weeks significantly reduced their usage. Offending and being missing is a concern in the home. The group of young people accommodated has recently changed, reducing incidents of this behaviour. At the time of inspection, a young person had not been missing or arrested for over two weeks, which is a great improvement.

Young people share their views on their home in group and individual meetings. Staff are encouraging young people to take ownership of their home and as a result they have chosen colour schemes and decided the layout for the lounge, dining and activities areas. Damage has reduced in the home and young people appear to be taking more of an interest in their surroundings.

Young people were not all involved in some form of formal education in the summer term. However plans are in place to ensure all young people have formal education in the autumn term and are now engaged in education with age appropriate peers. The home has actively sought potential college placements with GCSE components for those young people who struggle in school or who have been permanently excluded. When not in education, young people are encouraged to engage in positive activities, including English and maths with tutors and independence skills such as laundry,

household maintenance and budgeting.

Quality of care

good

Young people benefit from increasingly positive relationships with staff. Young people have responded well to some additions to the team alongside maintaining some excellent relationships with existing staff. Despite young people commenting they feel staff 'don't care', their interactions demonstrate they are aware how much staff care about their wellbeing. Staff use a variety of methods to positively engage individuals, including planned ignoring of some negative behaviour and comments towards staff, while continuing to positively communicate with young people. Staff form sound working relationships with parents, carers and a range of external agencies to promote continuity in care for young people.

Young people's views are taken into consideration in all aspects of their lives. Weekly group meetings enable young people to raise any ideas they have and records demonstrate staff response. A significant change from a complaint resulted in young people having a small amount of daily money as their reward if they wished to, instead of saving it for a specified activity. Young people are actively involved in their review process and when required, have access to independent advocates. Contact with family and friends is encouraged, including facilitating weekly family contact, often over long distances. Young people are able to have friends visit the home and a robust procedure is in place should they wish to stay at friends' homes.

Young people's care plans reflect local authority placement plans and individual needs. Targets are clear and reviewed regularly. Any areas of progress or in need of development are highlighted by staff and added to the reviewed plan, providing an excellent level of evaluation. Currently the plans do not fully include young people's view of themselves and their individual identity aside from the cultural, religious and linguistic background.

Young people's positive behaviour is promoted through a variety of tools, including the monetary or extra activity based reward programme. In addition young people have verbal encouragement and small rewards such as a milkshake while out on an activity. Sanctions are now fair and proportionate and shifting away from monetary based punishments. The recently implemented approach focuses more on restoration and staff are increasingly using this. While still in its infancy, results appear positive, with young people taking more responsibility for their actions and understanding the impact on others. Young people's daily diaries prompt discussion about their day and consideration of how tomorrow could be better.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people say they feel safe within the home and staff do all they can to keep them safe in the community. Young people identify staff they would go to if they were worried or upset and young people's demeanour evidenced how comfortable and safe they feel. Staff have a good understanding of young people's vulnerabilities and work proactively with partner agencies to reduce individual risks. Staff are confident in processes to follow should they be concerned for a young person's welfare. Bullying has previously been identified as a concern. However this was not noticed by staff for a considerable length of time. Once identified though, the home responded in a robust manner including extra staff and the introduction of night time door alarms for specific young people and corridor areas. Additionally bullying is a regular agenda item for young people's meetings to keep it a live subject. These measures have significantly reduced incidents of bullying.

Safeguarding investigations are managed promptly and in a robust manner. While all information is recorded appropriately, it is contained in several documents, making it difficult to read what action has been taken in a chronological order. Policies within the home have been updated in response to safeguarding concerns in the home and local community. Policies and procedure also reflect issues identified in the area risk assessment, completed in conjunction with the local police.

Young people do go missing from the home. When young people leave the home without permission or do not return on time, staff try and remain in contact with them. When safe to do so, they follow them or look for them in known locations. The home fosters a positive working relationship with local specialist police officers regarding young people who go missing and the risks they face while in the community. Offending and substance misuse is often a concern when specific young people are away from the home without permission. However this has reduced significantly in recent weeks, since the group dynamics changed. Staff support young people to identify the reasons why they left the home without permission and how they can prevent this happening in the future, including arranging activities to make staying in more appealing.

Individualised positive behaviour plans ensure all staff are consistent in their approach to unwanted or challenging behaviour. Observations showed staff remaining calm and redirecting conflict. Young people are encouraged to consider causes of unwanted behaviour and how they can respond more positively in the future. There has been a recent rise in the use of restraint, which is being monitored by the home manager and records show that restraints are justified by the circumstances at the time. Staff are trained in safe physical intervention practice with a focus on de-escalation.

Regular checks of environmental risks assessments, the building and procedures protect young people from unnecessary harm. Individual files contain up-to-date photographs of young people in case of emergency. Young people's risk assessments

focus on risk reduction, while enabling young people to be involved in age appropriate activities. The frequency of room searches when young people are missing has reduced. Young people understand the circumstances where their belongings would be searched and searches are recorded thoroughly. The organisation's recruitment policy is thorough, including robust personnel checks.

Leadership and management

good

The home has been without a Registered Manager since May 2014. The current home manager has submitted their application to become registered. In the few months in which they have been employed, they have made improvements to various areas of practice including implemented a more restorative approach to sanctions and responded to requirements and recommendations made in the other home in the organisation. The manager keeps abreast of any changes to regulations and legislation and is committed to change and progress.

The home manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the home. Through their day to day presence and evaluative monthly monitoring, the manager has identified many areas for development over the coming months. The experienced deputy managers also help form an effective team, supporting staff and evaluating the current service. Quarterly scrutiny of monthly monitoring is thorough and identifies trends and patterns. The annual development plan identifies many areas for refurbishment. Although many areas requiring modernisation have been improved, the maintenance of the home remains a concern, in particular the décor in in some communal areas and mould and mildew in one of the bathrooms.

Comprehensive reports in relation to visits conducted under Regulation 33 provide further insight into the quality of service provided. The home welcomes feedback from partner agencies and acts upon any concerns highlighted. Close liaison with local police to produce the area risk assessment highlights some local concerns; however the home has implemented plans to reduce the risk to young people. The home is appropriately located and close bus and rail links ensure young people have the independence they require to visit friends and family independently when appropriate.

The Statement of Purpose reflects the service provided by the home and staff have a sound understanding of the functions and ethos of the service. They are confident in their roles and how to meet the needs of young people. The young people's guide is age appropriate and contains information about the home and staff and how to contact local and national advice and advocacy services. In addition, young people have been supported by staff to access external agencies to complain about services they receive when required.

The home demonstrates a mostly effective multi-agency approach to caring for young people. The managers and staff seek support for young people when they are

struggling with various aspects of their lives, including emotional wellbeing specialist, education professionals and youth offending teams. Services that are not performing are challenged when as necessary and missing placement documents have been sought from placing authorities. There have been no recent complaints about the home from neighbours and the local community. Any concerns raised are managed promptly and effectively, and resolved to the aggrieved party's satisfaction.

There have been some changes to the staff team recently, although new staff have come from another home in the organisation. This has resulted in minimum disruption to young people, as they already know some staff and staff already have experience of the organisations methods of caring for young people. Staff are positive about their roles and enjoy the work they do. The management team are positive role models and staff feel they are supported through regular formal and informal supervision. Observations showed staff are comfortable approaching managers with any ideas or concerns they have. Staff benefit from sound mandatory training opportunities in order to complete their roles effectively. Newly appointed staff complete an induction programme specific to the service, based on the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards.

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.