

Children's homes – interim inspection

Inspection date	25/04/2016
Unique reference number	SC042147
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Child First Limited
Registered person address	c/o 40 Oxford Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 1UT

Responsible individual	Terry Goble
Registered manager	Sandra Whyte
Inspector	Jennie Christopher

Inspection date	25/04/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged Good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness. Since the last inspection, a new service manager with a strong track record has come into post. They are focusing on improving the service provided for young people and supporting the staff team to grow and develop its practice in caring for young people. As a result, young people are making some good progress through their warm relationships with staff, despite many recent changes in personnel. Young people are confident in their interactions with staff and are keen to approach them, to chat and spend time with them. Young people commented positively about their relationships with staff, and feel that there is someone whom they can go to with any worries or concerns. Staff are becoming more responsive to individual needs, and are increasingly proactive in seeking ways in which to best support young people who are upset or in crisis. For example, a member of staff amended agreed plans in order to give individual time to a young person who was becoming upset and distressed, by taking them out in the community to have a chance to talk with them alone. This was extremely effective in supporting the individual at the time. Three young people were placed in the home at the time of the last inspection, and one young person remains in the home. He is making some excellent progress in many aspects of his life. He continues to attend college and is planning to continue on his course for the next academic year. He has recently started a paper round, and with support from staff is on time each day. This has also helped his college attendance and sleep patterns. He commented on how pleased he is with the job and how he likes the extra money. His mother echoed how pleased she is with him securing a job and with his attendance at college. One young person, who has moved on, did so in a planned manner, to a service in preparation for his transition into adulthood. He remains in contact with staff and has visited the home to see the other young person and his friends in the community. The third young person has moved on to secure accommodation, because he was placed as an emergency measure in the home. Five young people have moved into the home since the last inspection, of whom four remain. Planning prior to placement is sound, and good-quality impact risk	

assessments are completed prior to placement. However, the mix of young people is not ideal. The registered manager and service manager recognise this and are in the process of liaising with placing authorities to consider moves within the organisation, while keeping young people's needs central to their plans. All those in placement attend education as programmed. The registered manager has close links with the virtual school and education professionals, to support those who are currently unable to manage a classroom environment or who are on part-time timetables. Tutors regularly visit the home, but engagement is not always effective. Staff were observed encouraging young people to engage with tutors, and to undertake positive activities during the school day. Staff also work closely with schools, including supporting young people in the classroom as required. This has enabled some young people to increase their confidence in the education environment. While there is still some way to go, the home is doing all that it can to encourage young people to attend. A social worker commented that 'staff are doing an incredible job', and they have supported the young person to 'allow staff to care for her'.

Young people appear to feel safe in the home, and their interactions with staff demonstrate that they are comfortable in their company. They say that they can approach staff with any worries or concerns, and records show staff swiftly responding to and acting on any issues raised. Staff are confident in their roles and understand their responsibilities regarding safeguarding. They have a good knowledge of the vulnerabilities of those whom they care for. Any concerns are forwarded to partner agencies, and appropriate action has been taken when concerns relate to staff's conduct. Young people who are missing from the home are searched for in known locations, and staff consistently try to make contact with them via mobile phones. When appropriate, the police are contacted to support the location and safe return of young people. The management team is planning to liaise with social workers to agree specific times when the police should be called, to reduce the number of reports made when they are aware where the young person is and that they are likely to be safe, for example late home from being with friends. Staff have received training in child sexual exploitation, and those young people who were at significant risk, or who were being exploited prior to placement, have responded well to staff support and boundaries. Their risk of exploitation has greatly reduced. There is a coordinated response should they be missing, or if there are any concerns regarding their safety or well-being.

Some young people are currently involved in youth offending programmes, mostly due to orders in place prior to their placement. Offending has reduced for those young people since living in the home. The home has close links with substance misuse workers, and refers individuals to these services when appropriate. Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in calls to the police regarding young people's behaviours in the home. These have included criminal damage and assaults on staff, among others. As a result, young people have been charged with offences and are known to the youth offending team. There is no policy within the home regarding the use of police as a behaviour management response. There is no formal process for when staff should call them, or any process to follow if they

have been injured by a young person, such as a discussion with senior staff regarding the incident and the young person's intent. The team has been benefiting from training in restorative justice, and the recently appointed service manager is keen to develop staff skills in behaviour management, which has included a significant reduction in the use of restraint.

The home continues to be well run by an experienced registered manager. She has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the home and service provided. She has excellent support from the recently appointed service manager, who is guiding the manager through the many changes and improvements that the service required. A new independent visitor, who will provide greater evaluation of the service and challenge to the management team, has been appointed in line with Regulation 44. It is anticipated that the change of visitor will provide greater consistency and that reports will now be forwarded to Ofsted as required. The registered manager is reflective of the service provided and is using greater levels of evaluation in her monitoring of the home. The development plan for the coming months is robust and focuses not only on improving the fabric of the building, but also on developing staff skills, knowledge and understanding where behaviour is rooted in young people, and what it is trying to express.

In the period prior to the current service manager coming into post, the home had been in a state of flux throughout the transition period. This has led to staff supervisions not always being completed at regular intervals. Additionally, records have not always been kept up to date or recorded in the correct place. An example is a complaint from a neighbour not being recorded as such, but as part of an incident. This has led to the manager not necessarily being aware of the issue in full. Additionally, there is no record of the response and conclusion to the issue raised.

Requirements and recommendations set at the last inspection have been addressed. All young people's local authority plans are available in the home, and there is evidence of challenge when there have been delays in accessing these. Individual in-house plans have been developed to ensure that there is clarity on who is responsible for varying aspects of the young people's care, ensuring that health appointments or referrals, for example, are not missed. Finally, consideration has been given to key work sessions and to how to improve the effectiveness of these. While this has been considered, it is yet to be fully embedded in practice. Therefore, it remains a recommendation.

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 with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/09/2015	CH - Full	Good
26/05/2015	CH - Full	Inadequate
27/01/2015	CH - Interim	Declined in effectiveness
12/08/2014	CH - Full	Good

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered persons 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 persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ('the behaviour management policy') which sets out how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home, and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. It must also indicate when police intervention should be used and the process for doing this (Regulation 35(1)(a)(b)).	31/05/2016
The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation (Regulation 39(3)).	31/05/2016

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the registered person has systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, so that this allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards, page 61, paragraph 13.2).
- ensure that when the registered manager highlights areas for improvement these are acted upon. This is with specific regard to noting areas for further discussion in key work sessions ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2).

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection, we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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