

Children's home inspection – Full

Inspection date	15/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC045408
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Heather Chaplin

Inspection date	15/03/2017
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	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC045408

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The overall experiences and outcomes for the young people are good. The young people have gained in confidence and have made considerable progress since admission.
- Some parents are pleased with their child's progress and say that the home has provided the best care that the young person has received to date.
- Direct work with the young people is the cornerstone of this home. The staff speak with them about any areas of difficulty and help the young people to resolve problems before they escalate.
- Young people who were not in school prior to admission now attend an educational provision and are making plans for college.
- The young people are encouraged to eat healthy, wholesome home-cooked food. This promotes their health and development and helps to create a nurturing, family atmosphere.
- The staff encourage the young people to take part in physical activities, which help to develop fitness and improve their mood and self-esteem.
- The experienced diverse staff team works extremely effectively together. Many team members have worked in the home for several years.
- Although the home does not currently have a registered manager, the interim manager is well supported in her role by senior colleagues and team members.
- Staff recruitment is managed safely and involves input from the young people. The information kept on individual staff is comprehensive and shows that effective checks are carried out before employees start work.
- The home provides a very calm and relaxing environment for the young people. New furnishings and fittings have helped to create an attractive and homely space which the young people value.

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

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 (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 protection of children standard 12 (1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure– (a) that staff– (v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and (vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. This is with particular reference to the need to follow the procedures described in 'Working together to safeguard children' (April 2015) with regard to the roles and responsibilities of different agencies involved in child protection investigations.	30/04/2017
The leadership and management standard 13 (1) The registered person must enable, inspire and lead a culture in relation to the children's home that– (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to– (a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose. This is with particular reference to ensuring: – that the interim manager submits an application to Ofsted to be	30/04/2017

registered – that both the person giving the supervision and staff member have a copy of the supervision record within two working days, in line with the local authority's supervision policy – that the home's recording systems ensure that all records are accessible and recorded in a way that contributes to internal and external monitoring processes – that new staff receive regular planned supervision with a named person, at intervals appropriate to their level of experience – that fire alarm tests are conducted at intervals recommended by the local fire and rescue service – that the home's statement of purpose and 'Children's guide' are regularly updated to provide current information about the staff team and external sources of support.	
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Recommendations

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

- Ensure that records are kept of the administration of all medication, which includes occasions when prescribed medication is refused. Regulation 23 requires the registered person to ensure that they make suitable arrangements to manage, administer and dispose of any medication. In particular, ensure that administration of controlled drugs is always recorded in a book specifically designed for this purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', April 2015, page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. In particular, when the home is caring for children and young people who are at grave risk of harm, including from self-injurious behaviours, consider holding multi-agency meetings to review whether their needs can still be met within the home and whether additional intervention is required. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', April 2015, page 42, paragraph 9.5 and page 46, paragraph 9.32)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by a local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to two children and young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/06/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
30/11/2015	Full	Good
02/09/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
05/01/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
This was a very positive inspection, during which the inspector observed some excellent direct work with the young people. High quality individual care helps the young people to gain in confidence and make good progress. Relationships between the staff and the young people are warm, nurturing and respectful. The manager and staff have a very good understanding of how these relationships are crucial to achieving good outcomes. As a result, both of the young people are making very good progress and are building enduring and supportive relationships. These relationships extend beyond the young people's time in care. A previous resident visited the home during the inspection to speak with staff and keep in touch. One young person has only been in the home for two weeks but is already beginning to have open and honest conversations with the staff. Other young people have been in the home for approximately eight months, during which time incidents of going missing, substance misuse and self-harm have reduced considerably. The young people have matured and gained considerably in their ability to work through any problems through discussion rather than acting out their distress. Parents are very pleased with their children's progress. One parent said that the home provides their child with 'a safe and supportive environment... he has definitely, definitely, improved since he's been there'. The staff constantly seek the young people's views about their day-to-day experiences, activities, food choices and other matters that have an impact on their lives. The staff also spend individual time with the young people, talking with them about matters that are causing them difficulty, such as peer relationships and behaviour. This is a real strength of the home. For example, throughout the inspection, staff were working directly with the young people on a difficulty that had arisen between them. The staff used their skills to resolve an incident that could have become a major problem for the young people, had it been allowed to escalate. Discussion took place during the inspection about the importance of enabling young people to have an advocate if they should choose to do so. One young person has been consulted but has so far declined to have an advocate. The most recently admitted young person has not yet been offered this opportunity, but it is	

early days in their placement. The home's managers recognise the importance of advocacy and say that they will approach the subject with the new young person at a suitable opportunity, so no recommendation has been made on this occasion.

Both of the young people attend an educational resource. Although they have not yet built up to receiving 25 hours of education per week, they have engaged with this very well. Prior to admission, some young people were not in school at all, so, for them, this is exceptional progress. They are now planning to take a foundation course which will support them in their longer-term plans to start at a local college from September.

The young people's healthcare needs are well managed. They are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians and receive therapeutic intervention through an education and therapy resource centre as well as through the child and adolescent mental health service. Parents commented that previous health conditions had been resolved and that their child now leads a much healthier lifestyle than they did on admission.

The young people are fully involved in planning their activities and meals. The home specialises in excellent home cooking and the young people enjoy their meals. The manager explained that all the staff cook well and that she considers this to be a very important skill because it has such a powerful impact on young people's daily quality of care. The young people are encouraged to eat their meals around the table with the staff, as a family. This helps to nurture the young people and make them feel valued.

The young people enjoy a variety of activities, although some are at an age when meeting up with friends is the most important part of their lives. They enjoy active pastimes such as walks in the country, trampolining and going to the gym, as well as indoor-based computer games. Some young people went on holiday to Spain with their staff team. This was a very positive experience for them, which broadened their horizons, exposed them to different activities and increased their confidence in their ability to handle new situations.

The home understands and supports positive contact between the young people and family members. One young person is now managing contact himself, in line with his approaching independence. This young person said that he is looking forward to moving into his own accommodation, although he is likely to miss the home and the staff team, so it will be a major change in lifestyle for him. He is very competent in using public transport and is a good cook who enjoys home baking. This young person has also begun to benefit from work experience. He also helped coordinate a trip to Thorpe Park, working alongside staff and his girlfriend's parents. This helped to develop organisational skills.

Recently, some young people have engaged in very serious self-injurious behaviour. The staff responded to this very professionally and correctly, but,

because there is a significant risk to the life and long-term health of the young people, a recommendation has been made that, as for other high-risk situations involving children looked after, care planning and decision-making should be supported by the multi-agency team around the child. The social worker advised the inspector that the forthcoming review will involve healthcare professionals.

Medication records are generally well kept, although the staff and manager had not realised that one of the medications in use is a controlled drug and should be recorded in an appropriate manner. The home has a controlled drugs book and started to record this medicine correctly on the day of the inspection. A recommendation has been made.

Over the nine-month period between this visit and the previous inspection, the home has faced some major changes. The registered manager left in October 2016, and this, combined with unavoidable absences of other key team members, led to staff shortages. The new management team handled these challenges well and, by doing so, avoided any negative impact on the young people. The new manager has had to establish herself with the team and find her feet under difficult circumstances and is commended for her hard work and dedication.

However, the lack of a registered manager for five months has led to the home's management team and staff working very long hours. The oversights in leadership and management described below are a consequence of these pressures. None of the shortfalls have affected the young people's welfare or safety.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Serious incidents, restraints and instances when young people went missing from home have all reduced in frequency since the previous inspection. Some young people who went missing during the early days of their placement no longer do so. When they go out with friends, they now keep in touch with the staff and make them aware of their location, in case they get into difficulty. This is major progress in terms of the young people's personal safety. Physical interventions have taken place in the home, but are only carried out as a last resort. All restraints have been appropriate and are usually of short duration. Records state that one restraint lasted an hour and 20 minutes, but, at some stage, it turned into a nurturing hold, described as 'a cuddle'. Recording requires further refinement here, because it is not clear at what stage during this long period of time this transition to a cuddle took place.	

The staff work with the young people in a restorative way and emphasise how learning from mistakes is more important than consequences. When consequences are put in place, these are fair and appropriate. Although the police have been called on a small number of occasions, this has always been confined to situations when staff and young people were at risk of serious harm. The last incident involved a young person who is no longer resident returning to the home on a planned contact with one of the present residents. This did not go according to plan, and the visiting young person had to be removed. There has been no repetition since then. There has been learning from all of these incidents, and the home has modified its practice in some areas.

The young people's care planning is well supported by clear risk assessments. An impact risk assessment is also completed on any proposed new admission of a young person.

The local authority has a robust system in place to ensure that newly recruited staff are suitable and safe to work with children and young people. The home's staff files are well ordered and contain all the information required by regulation. One point for development is that some of the staff photographs are difficult to see clearly, because they are photocopies of passports and driving licences. Although the home does need to retain proof of these identity checks completed during recruitment, they may wish to include the county's official identity photograph on the files for additional clarity.

All of the serious notifications sent to Ofsted since the previous inspection have been followed up. Almost all were very well handled, with the young person's safety as the highest priority. The only incident that was not handled optimally involved an allegation of possible physical abuse. Staff notified the social worker promptly, as required. However, staff did not, at the time, fully understand the decision-making protocols that help to ensure that potential evidence is preserved. They discussed the allegation with adults outside the home who may have been witnesses or possibly perpetrators. The allegation was subsequently retracted, so the impact of this mistake was minimal. A senior manager identified and challenged practice at the time, and the staff involved learned from this experience. A requirement has been made under the protection of children quality standard.

During a difficult period of time, marked by staff shortages and the managers having to work on shift, a number of fire alarm tests were missed after 5 November 2016. On 12 December, fire alarm tests were reinstated and, since then, have taken place at the recommended weekly intervals. This oversight has been included in a requirement made under the leadership and management quality standard. All other health and safety checks have been carried out effectively.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement, primarily because the home has been without a registered manager since 14 October 2016. The other shortfalls found can also be attributed to this difficult period. The shortfalls identified below have been included in a requirement made under the leadership and management quality standard. Although an interim manager has been in post since December, no application for registration has yet been received. This means that the home has been without a registered manager for 22 weeks. The interim manager explained that she was in the process of finalising her application when the inspector arrived at the home to conduct the inspection. She has undertaken to complete the application as soon as possible. The interim manager is supporting her staff extremely well through example, clear leadership and communication. She has started to review all the home's paperwork systems, but, over the last few months, she has been hampered in this process by the need to help cover the rota, because some staff have left and one of the two deputy team leaders is on maternity leave. The manager explained that she and her remaining deputy have both had to work on shift until recently, in order to ensure that the young people receive continuity of care. New staff are now being appointed, and the manager has recently been able to stop working on shift, so the situation is improving. Staff value their supervision and feel very well supported by the management team. However, one new member of staff who was still on probation was not assigned a named supervisor while her own line manager was on annual leave. Although she is very competent and experienced in working with children and young people, being invited to approach another manager for support in her own manager's absence may not always provide sufficient supervisory input for someone who is new in their post. The local authority's supervision policy says that staff should receive notes within two days of the meeting. Some staff with supervisory responsibilities have been under much pressure recently and hence have not produced completed supervision notes in a timely manner. Senior managers suggested that the team's administrator should type up the notes, but her unforeseen absence due to ill health has prevented this. These combined factors have meant that staff have not received their supervision notes for some weeks. They are not, therefore, able to refer to these to guide their practice. The interim manager has produced a regulation 45 report on the quality of the service. The latest regulation 44 report available is detailed and evaluative. These	

documents provide a good overview of the home's progress and some recommendations for further improvement. During the inspection, the staff and young people were disposing of old, outdated furniture that was no longer useful and setting up new furnishings to further enhance the dining area.

The home's records are detailed and comprehensive. Taken together, they provide all the necessary information to help staff to care for the young people effectively. Although the present system works well for the managers and staff, the dispersed nature of some of the recording sometimes makes it more challenging for external monitoring bodies to obtain an overview.

For example, important conversations with young people are recorded in the staff's daily records, but only some of them appear in the 'golden conversations' section of the file record, so they are located in different places. Similarly, rewards for the young people's positive behaviour are recorded in their individual monthly summaries. Restraints are filed alongside missing-from-home and serious incident records, with no summary log. This makes it difficult for persons who do not know the home or the young people well to compare qualitative information so that trends and patterns can be identified across incidents.

A senior manager said that the local authority is currently considering different options for developing recording systems in the future. They are considering moving to an electronic system to maximise the usefulness of records to the young people themselves and to adults who need to have reliable and efficient access to them. The home has a good statement of purpose, but it has not been updated or sent to Ofsted since April 2015, despite a number of staff and management changes. A minor change is required to the 'Children's guide', so that it contains only current information about sources of advocacy and external support.

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. Whenever 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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