

Children's home inspection – Full

Inspection date	02/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC047978
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	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	Kim Spencer
Inspector	Caroline Brailsford

Inspection date	02/11/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved 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	Good

SC047978

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people's experiences are positive given their starting point. High-quality care leads to some good progress.
- The admissions procedure works particularly well because the manager speaks to a range of different professionals to ensure that young people will be safe, well cared for and in the right placement.
- Young people's self-harming behaviour is well understood by staff who always respond with care and compassion.
- Young people start to develop more positive coping strategies to reduce their own anxiety. This is because they are helped to do so by appropriate health professionals and staff at the home.
- Young people's missing episodes are well monitored. Patterns and trends are well understood. This means that young people get the right help when they need it.
- Young people develop a sense of safety in readiness for independence and their transition into adult services.
- There are a high number of incidents, but this is a reflection of young people's needs and behaviours rather than the quality of care.
- The manager is very committed to young people's progress and always has their best interests at heart.
- Following some mistakes in the handling of a particular missing-from-home episode, lessons have been learned. This shows that the manager and the organisation are forward-thinking and committed to improvement.

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
Ensure that individuals are only employed to work at the children's home if there is full and satisfactory information available in relation to each of the matters listed in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (3)(d), Schedule 2) This is in particular relation to agency staff where a full employment history and two satisfactory references are not always obtained.	30/11/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that a child's care plan forms the basis of their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.1.) This is in relation to the care planning process, which is not always clear on how young people's needs should be met.
- Ensure that the environment is homely and domestic. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9.) This is in relation to a young person's bedroom door, which looks unsightly, and some paintwork that is marked and dirty.
- Ensure that the workforce plan details the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation, core training and supervision of their practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8.) This is in particular relation to agency staff who work in the home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and provides care and accommodation to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
06/07/2015	Full	Requires improvement
07/01/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/06/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people who have suffered trauma in their past, and who present with significant self-harm issues, start to make good progress. Staff acknowledge that progress only happens when young people can start to feel better about themselves and come to terms with their past. Young people engage well with the organisation's psychologist, who assists them to develop more positive coping strategies. Some young people receive help with their mental health issues from a psychiatrist. Extremely close working relationships between health professionals and staff ensure the good exchange of important information. For example, the manager monitors patterns and trends and continues to report progress and difficulties to relevant professionals. This means that young people can be appropriately supported. Over time, young people's self-harm behaviour significantly reduces. Young people leave the home with the skills they need for the future. They grow in emotional resilience and become better able to keep themselves safe. Staff are skilled at supporting young people through transitions. Where there are concerns, the home's use of an independent advocate is instrumental to ensuring that young people's views about their own future are heard. One young person said: 'They are helping me to work with an advocate'. This practice gives young people a clear message that they can have their say. Young people are listened to. Young people's progress with their health, emotional well-being and education allows for a better quality of life. Some young people have struggled to access activities in the past because of their mental health, particularly those who had been placed in hospitals or secure children's homes. These young people now access a wider range of social activities. This means that they do not miss out on leisure and community activities because of the complexity of their behaviour. When young people settle into the home they become more stable and develop improved mental health. At this point staff ensure that they have opportunities to access and progress with education. Some young people start to access education for the first time in many months or years. One young person told the inspector about their education saying: 'It is going really well'. Care planning reflects the majority of young people's needs. It also ensures that staff are aware of how these needs should be met. However, the extensive work needed to support young people to achieve positive outcomes is not always captured in care plans. This has not impacted on young people to date, but there is the potential for important information to be overlooked and a lack of direction	

because the care plans are not always comprehensive.

The building provides a generally pleasant home environment. There have been some recent adaptations to provide a safer environment for young people who are at risk of self-harm. However, some areas are looking tired and in need of decoration. For example, the landing, and, particularly, one bedroom door looks very unsightly because of its badly marked and dirty paintwork. Young people may not feel proud of their home if this is not put right.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people are often admitted to the home at a time of crisis in their lives. Some present with significant safety issues, for example self-harm behaviours which pose a risk to them. Their risk-taking behaviours often persist until they are helped to develop more positive coping strategies. This generates improved self-esteem, and young people grow in emotional resilience. Staff accept that this can be a long process and acknowledge that there can be peaks and troughs in behaviours. Staffing levels are very high during peaks, and staff supervision levels are tailored to individual need. This minimises the impact of harmful behaviours. Young people's episodes of going missing are related to their emotional well-being. This means that some young people continue to go missing while the staff work with them. Reducing episodes of going missing is a high priority, and staff follow clear protocols. They always look for young people and make sure that the appropriate professionals and agencies are informed at the earliest opportunity. There has been one missing-from-home episode that was not handled well. However, it is very clear that lessons have been learned. The incident has been analysed with a high level of management scrutiny. Practice has improved, leading to an overall positive picture of young people's safety. There has been an unsettled period in recent weeks, with a high number of significant incidents. This is not a reflection of poor management, but of the profile of young people who present with very complex issues. There has been some reliance on agency staff on many shifts. This is because staffing levels have had to increase where some individuals' risks have increased. However, there has always been a good balance of the home's own competent and well-trained staff on duty. This ensures that staffing remains consistent and meets young people's needs. Young people are safe and protected from adults who might be unsuitable. Visitors are all checked, and staff recruitment processes are rigorous. However, there is not	

always the same level of robust scrutiny of agency staff who come to work at the home. There is a reliance on the agency to ensure that checks have been undertaken. This has led to agency staff working in the home without a full employment history or properly scrutinised references. Although there has been no negative impact on young people, this shortfall has the potential to expose young people to unsuitable adults.

All areas of the building have been particularly well risk assessed with regard to young people's self-harm issues. Young people's individual risk assessments are also particularly detailed. There is clear information for staff on how young people's ever-changing and complex safeguarding needs should be met.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager is working towards her level 5 diploma in leadership and management and has the skills and experience required to run a children's home of this nature. The home has been well managed through a difficult period, in which there were a high level of incidents. The manager and staff have worked tirelessly because they care about young people's welfare. The manager has worked well over and above her hours, demonstrating her dedication to her role. She has continued to lead the staff team and to model good working practices with this vulnerable group of young people. The manager is absolutely clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the home but reports that the recent unsettled period has not allowed her to keep on top of managerial tasks such as completing formal monitoring. However, it is very clear that her monitoring is robust. She regularly appraises young people's progress using a range of evidence and frequently seeks their views. Young people are always at the centre of the home. The manager issues questionnaires to professionals and parents to complement her already comprehensive knowledge of what has gone well and what needs to improve. Professionals report that they receive good-quality information in a timely way. This supports effective decision-making. One professional commented on the 'high-quality information' that was sent to them. The core staff training profile demonstrates that staff have the knowledge and expertise to provide high-quality care. They are confident in their own abilities. There have been several new additions to the staff team since the last inspection, and young people welcome a more diverse staff team. Despite a difficult period in	

recent weeks, the staff are very committed to young people. They are a developing team who have a very kind and nurturing approach. They are patient and always make sure that young people can make progress at their own pace. Young people are never rushed, and they are praised at every opportunity. The high level of respect that staff have for young people is evident.

Some aspects of leadership and management have not been as strong. While it is clear that core staff are well supported, inducted and supervised, agency staff have not been managed as well. Their induction is not documented. One agency employee reported that they had received some guidance and spent some time with the manager but had not had formal supervision sessions. Opportunities have been missed to appraise agency workers' performance. There is evidence to suggest that they have managed some very difficult situations well. For example, when a young person needed to be restrained because of their dangerous behaviour, an agency staff member helped to keep them safe. However, agency staff lack training in behaviour management. There is the potential for this to impact on young people in the future because they might not be entirely familiar with the home's own method of physical intervention.

The requirements and recommendations from the last inspection are met. There have been improvements to core staff induction, independent return interviews after young people have been missing, and to complaints records.

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 who 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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