

SC051947

Registered provider: After Care (N W) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care and accommodation for two young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 22 to 23 November 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **Good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 5 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Young people benefit from personalised care provided by a dedicated and nurturing staff team.
- Staff are skilled at fostering trusting relationships with young people. These mutual trusting relationships help young people to feel safe and secure in their home.

- With staff's continued care, support and guidance, young people make noticeable progress in all aspects of their lives.
- Staff are good advocates for young people. As a result, young people have a strong voice at this home and they are meaningfully engaged in decision-making.
- Staff work in partnership with other professionals to make sure that any major changes in the young person's life are well planned and those transitions are smooth.
- Young people are safe because staff get to know the young people well and they are fully alert to potential dangers, taking effective action when necessary to minimise harm.
- A dedicated and child-focused registered manager leads the team exceptionally well.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Ensure that young people have sufficient clothing and storage space for their belongings.
- Staff professional supervision and some areas of training.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
04/05/2016	Full	Good
15/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/11/2015	Full	Requires improvement

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to 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 person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children and that they use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably and provide to children personal items that are appropriate for their age and understanding. (Regulation 6 (2)(b)(vii)(viii)) In particular, provide clothing and storage space for young people's personal items and belongings.	22/01/2018

Recommendations

- Any child who has been restrained should be given the opportunity express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicable, ideally within 24 hours of the restraint incident, taking the age of the child and the circumstances of the restraint into account. In some cases children may need longer to work through their feelings, so a record that the child has talked about their feelings should be made no longer than 5 days after the incident of restraint (regulation 35(3)(c)). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.60) In particular, ensuring that debriefs with young people are independent of those involved in the restraint.
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their development needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11) In particular, maintain the frequency of staff's professional supervision and ensure

that new staff receive training in the home's therapeutic model.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people benefit from well-planned, personalised care that enables them to make the necessary changes and improvements in their lives. They make noticeable progress from their starting points across most aspects of their lives. Staff understand young people's needs and help them to overcome their fears and any obstacles to their progress. For example, when young people refuse to attend school and have been without formal education for some time, staff work collaboratively with the school, social worker and the young person to overcome the barriers to their learning. This has involved advocating young people's wishes and feelings at education meetings, negotiating suitable timetables and requesting educational assessments. Additionally, staff put incentives in place to encourage young people to re-engage with their learning. As a result, young people's attendance and engagement with their education improve.

Staff are skilled at building warm trusting relationships with young people. Their consistent nurturing care supports young people to develop and maintain positive attachments. This is reflected in a young person's comment: 'This home is the best.' Observations of young people hugging staff during the inspection also confirmed this. Staff's consistent care and ability to establish positive relationships form a key strength of the team and is central to young people's stability.

Young people benefit from greater permanency and consistency in their lives. A social worker said, 'The quality of care provided to [young person] has in my view been very good. Our purpose of placing him at this home was to provide him with a stable placement. He has developed really positive relationships with the staff and he feels he is able to speak with them. They spend time listening to him and boosting his self-esteem, which is something he really struggles with.'

Staff are positive role models, whom the young people look up to and learn from. Young people feel listened to and they are encouraged to get involved in the running of the home, making decisions about activities, meals and when appropriate, staffing issues. Young people have a strong voice. Staff swiftly respond to their requests and any concerns. Staff explain to young people when their requests cannot be met and help them to understand the reasons why. As a result, young people feel valued, respected and listened to.

Young people enjoy a range of activities and hobbies, such as, biking and scootering, as well as spending time with staff. This provides young people with opportunities to

develop their interests, skills and friendships. What is more, these activities are helping to build young people's self-esteem, as well as diverting them into constructive and safe pursuits.

Arrangements are in place to promote young people's health. Staff advise young people about key health issues, including personal hygiene and sexual health, and they encourage them to lead and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Medical consent is in place so that staff are clear about what health decisions and responsibilities are delegated to them. Furthermore, young people have access to specialist services, such as therapeutic and counselling support. The manager has taken this one step further and arranged for the children and adolescent mental health services to attend a team meeting. This will provide staff with expert guidance on how to respond to a young people's emotional needs.

Staff support young people to prepare for independence by teaching them essential life skills and building their confidence and emotional resilience. Two young people have moved on to semi-independence since the last inspection. These major life changes have been successful because of staff's dedicated support and guidance. This is reflected in a care leaver's comments: 'The staff were great and they really helped me to prepare for my move. They showed me how to shop, cook and manage my money. I am really happy in my new home. I still keep in touch with the staff. They are like my family.'

The home provides young people with a safe and secure place to live where they feel cared for and wanted. The house is welcoming and homely and decorated to a high standard. Nevertheless, one young person did not have sufficient storage space in his bedroom, which meant that he had to store some of his belongings on the floor. Additionally, another young person moved to the home with very limited belongings and has insufficient clothing items. The registered manager and responsible individual have agreed to explore possible funding options so that these essential items can be purchased.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Staff have a good understanding of the needs and vulnerabilities of the young people and they take appropriate action to address them. Risks associated with young people are well known and understood by staff. The use of comprehensive risk assessment and individualised behaviour management plans promote the safety and well-being of young people.

Staff are trained to deal with safeguarding concerns and difficult behaviour and situations. They are confident and competent in implementing the home's policies and procedures should they have any concerns about young people's safety or welfare.

Professionals speak highly of this service in how they protect young people. A social worker said, 'The placement report any safeguarding concerns through myself and appear to have clear procedures around safeguarding. [Young person] has a specific care plan in which he is not able to be alone in the community outside of the placement. The placement staff abide by this and have tried to support him in understanding why his care plan is different from his peer in placement.'

Safeguarding is a priority at this home and staff are alert to all potential danger and tackle safeguarding concerns effectively. As a result, incidents of young people going missing from home, offending, drug use and aggressive behaviour decrease significantly when young people move into the home.

A particular strength of the home is the stability of the staff team. This enables young people to develop warm and trusting relationships with staff, whom they respect. Staff are patient, calm and good-humoured. What is more, they are equally confident about challenging unsafe or unwanted behaviour. This often involves providing the young people with time and space to work things out for themselves.

The team's approach to managing behaviour is to focus on the positive by constantly recognising and praising young people's good and kind actions. The home's records clearly demonstrate that positive rewards and praise far outweigh sanctions. Young people comment positively on the quality of care and guidance that they receive from staff. A young person described staff as 'sick' [cool].

Staff are skilled at de-escalating challenging situations and behaviour and they benefit from ongoing training in behaviour management. Consequently, staff rarely have to use physical intervention measures, such as restraint. When they have, it has been to safeguard young people, using safe and age-appropriate techniques. Improvements can be made in the debriefing of young people following a restraint. On one occasion, a young person was debriefed in the presence of a person who was involved in the restraint. This prevented him from having the opportunity to talk freely to an independent person about the situation and his feelings. This was an isolated incident.

The registered manager ensures that all staff are carefully selected and vetted before starting work in the home. Health and safety checks are routinely undertaken to make sure that the property remains safe and fit for purpose. Additionally, the local area assessment is regularly updated and is informed by local safeguarding professionals, such as the police and the child sexual exploitation team. As a result, young people benefit from living in a safer home and community.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is a committed and child-focused leader. She leads her team by example and is extremely well thought of by all staff and professionals. A commissioner of the service said, '[Name] and the team are working hard with [young person] to manage some very difficult behaviours and we couldn't ask for more.'

Staff feel well supported by their colleagues and the registered manager. They said that they benefit from regular professional supervision and have developmental opportunities to progress within the company. However, staff's supervision is not always carried out in line with the company's policy, in particular monthly or fortnightly for new staff. The manager acknowledged this and has identified staff supervision as an area that requires attention.

Staff benefit from monthly team meetings, which help them to reflect on practice, discuss young people's needs and identify areas of learning. In addition to this, staff training is strongly promoted and they are encouraged to access a wide range of courses. The team's individual workforce plans demonstrate this. Nevertheless, new staff have not yet received training on the company's therapeutic model, which can potentially undermine consistency in the team's therapeutic approach.

Young people's records are detailed, well structured and present a good overall picture of their background and life experiences at the home. Recording is of a high standard and records are stored securely, ensuring that confidential information is safe. In addition to this, staff support young people to record memories of their time at the home, such as photo albums that capture their experiences and time spent with staff at the home. These records provide young people with evidence of their progress and positive experiences at the home and helps them to reflect on their journey through care.

The manager makes sure that staff understand the ethos of the home and this improves the continuity of care provided. The team works collaboratively with parents, professionals and other agencies and this partnership working supports a consistent approach to young people's care. A professional's comments demonstrate this: 'I am impressed with the manager's approach and management style. The team work collaboratively with the social worker and his father. I am impressed with staff's knowledge of [young person] and consistency in the team.'

Sound internal and external monitoring systems are in place. The independent monthly visits are thorough and provide the manager with a detailed overview of the quality of care and protection provided in the home. The manager has used these visits to introduce positive changes in the home, for example the introduction of the daily praise book, which has helped to improve behaviour. Additionally, the manager's monthly

quality assurance audit provides clear evaluation on all aspects of life within the home and identifies areas for improvement and development.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC051947

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: After Care (N W) Limited

Registered provider address: 45 Kensington Road, Southport, Merseyside PR9 0RT

Responsible individual: Timothy Blundell

Registered manager: Rosie Binfield

Inspector

Marina Tully, social care inspector

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