

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC052744
Inspector	Denise Jolly
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Quality Protects Children Ltd
Registered person address	Hill House Archway Road Huyton Liverpool L36 9XB
Responsible individual	Anthony Nolan
Registered manager	Danielle Winifred Nevin
Date of last inspection	06/06/2014

Inspection date	23/07/2014
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Previous inspection	inadequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	Two compliance notices were issued on 10 June 2014. A monitoring visit took place on 08 July 2014 and both compliance notices had been complied with.

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The home has recovered from a period of disruption and instability, caused by a mix of young people living in the home with incompatible needs and vulnerabilities. Leaders and managers have acted swiftly, thoroughly and robustly to assess shortfalls. Both compliance notices issued on 10 June 2014 have been complied with. As a result, young people live in a home that promotes and makes proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of young people, and appropriate provision for their care and support. They have identified strategies and personnel to drive improvement in the home. They have conducted an honest review of the development needs of the team, and have limited admissions to the home until progress has been made. A new manager has been appointed, and the senior staff team has been enhanced by the addition of a psychologist, and a safeguarding and quality assurance manager. This has had an immediate impact on the quality of care provided to those who have continued to live in the home, and young people say that it is, 'much better now that those who created too much disturbance have gone.'

Young people are making good progress in most aspects of their lives. When they falter, such as when they go missing from the home, staff offer well planned interventions to help them recover and continue to progress. Revised care plans demonstrate immediate review, when young people's aspirations or behaviours change, in order that staff continue to offer safe and progressive support that best meets their needs. This has enabled the home to become a place of security and stability, from which young people transition effectively to their lives as young adults.

Staff are participating in a comprehensive and developmental training programme, that helps them to acquire the essential and specialised skills needed to support young people well. This includes multi-disciplinary training for child protection and welfare. Furthermore, managers have attended meetings with the host authority and the local police, to ensure that now and in the future, communication about young people's safety is circulated and managed effectively. This has improved young people's safety, welfare and progress, as well as underpinning good partnership working.

Robust monitoring, and close links of outcomes of the improved monitoring to development in the home, has resulted in all requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection being acted upon. This has improved the quality of care and relationships in the home, the professional support for staff, and the integrity of records maintained in the home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This service provides residential accommodation for up to five looked after young people, all with complex emotional and behavioural needs. The home is owned by a private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/06/2014	Full	inadequate
29/01/2014	Interim	good progress
27/06/2013	Full	good
24/09/2012	Interim	inadequate progress

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Following a period of significant unrest and instability, changes to staff and young people have already had a positive impact on improving outcomes for young people. Young people say they have good relationships with staff, and their social workers also confirm this. They say that they enjoy the increased opportunities for staff to spend productive time with them, for example, one young person said, 'I get to do more of the interesting activities with staff, like I used to.'

Most young people are reluctant to address, in any formal way, matters that are important to their care and welfare. However, they respond well to their keyworkers during practical activities like shopping or preparing meals, and provide staff with a clear picture of their needs and wishes. At times, young people disagree with staff advice and guidance, but they enjoy being praised for their efforts to make progress, such as when they return home in time for their curfew, or when they help each other to make meals. They have begun to participate in young person's meetings, to contribute to the life of the home, and make suggestions about such matters as relationships in the home, and the quality of staff support. This reflects their wish to be part of an improving and increasingly stable home.

Young people make good educational and vocational progress from the start of their placement. Young people's school attendance has improved and this has enabled them to achieve greater outcomes in education. Young people who refuse to attend school are supported to achieve in other enrichment activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, in order to experience success in a learning environment. Young people enhance their career opportunities by accessing vocational courses. Consequently, young people are confident, self-assured, and proud of their achievements.

Young people attend most health appointments and are fit and healthy. They do miss some, because young people choose not to attend. However, they contribute to their health and care plans in consultation with their keyworkers. They seek appropriate medical advice when they have sustained, for example, a sports injury while in the community, and follow recovery exercise plans provided by medical professionals. This has speeded up their recovery from the injury. Some young people use the gym to improve their physical health.

Young people work with staff and with other professionals, such as youth justice workers and health professionals, to gain knowledge and understanding about issues such as smoking, dangers associated with alcohol and drug misuse, and criminal activity. Although young people often choose not to follow advice and guidance, they say that this is part of 'growing up', and that staff are helping them to think about how to make better choices. Presently, impact on reducing this activity amongst the

young people is minimal.

Young people say they feel fully prepared and assisted when moving on and as a result are successful in their transition. Young people say they are 'happy with the move but will miss the staff.' They appreciate the efforts of staff to maintain relationships with them, once they leave the home, and enjoy returning to visit staff.

Young people benefit from contact with their families when it is safe and appropriate to do so. They know that staff speak regularly to the important adults in their lives, in order to support them to stay 'on track', when they are in their home community. This fosters a strong sense of identity, improving young people's self-esteem, confidence and emotional wellbeing.

Quality of care

good

Leaders and managers have shown drive and determination, to address the shortfalls identified in the quality of care provided at the last full inspection in early June 2014. Natural transfer of young people and a temporary policy of no admissions have provided the home with an opportunity to recover well from the stresses of a period of instability. More recently, changes of manager, new senior appointments, and some changes to staff, have created an opportunity for fresh thinking about the conduct of the home. This has resulted in relationships between staff and young people becoming more settled and focused on meeting their needs.

The level of disruption in the home has significantly reduced. Staff have used the time well, and demonstrate persistence when encouraging young people to participate in activities, key worker sessions, assessment and care planning. Young people say that they enjoy the 'quietness' of the home because staff spend more time with them.

With increased opportunities for professional discussion and reflection, staff are showing interest and skill in engaging young people to plan constructively for their futures. They persevere and seize any opportunity to instigate discussion about the choices young people make, and the impact this has on their lives. They do this, for example, by showing an interest in what young people are doing, joining in and using this time to open more structured debate. This shows young people that staff genuinely care, making them feel valued and respected. Further, this also increases the likelihood of their future engagement and cooperation. Young people say that they like working with their key workers, and that all the staff in the home are 'sound'.

Staff chase up missed appointments and are innovative in finding ways to get health services involved. For example, the home is inviting the sexual health nurse into the home to undertake direct work with young people. Key workers have been actively refreshing and updating young people's care plans, in consultation with young

people, and all professionals who support them. They have completed a review of the format used, to ensure the plans are detailed and tailored to the individual needs of the young people; these plans reflect the local authority plans, ensuring consistency and continuity in care, with shared goals and outcomes.

The newly appointed lead on quality assurance and safeguarding has revised the procedure for key worker sessions. The updated format provides prompts for staff and requires evaluation and the setting of clear targets. This will ensure that sessions are focused. At the time of the visit this new development had not been tested but staff are enthusiastic about its introduction; welcoming the guidance and structure this tool provides. An improvement in the quality of key worker sessions is evident; records demonstrate good analysis of the sessions and realistic targets being agreed with young people. Furthermore, staff discuss their findings in individual supervision and in staff meetings. This promotes consistency and continuity of care, because individuals responsible for actions are clearly identified within all records about young people.

The responses of young people to any planning suggestions are integrated into the goals and targets. Staff provide young people with good quality support in preparation and transition to independent living. Young people have free access to areas of the home like the kitchen, and often help each other to prepare simple meals, and tidy up after themselves. Staff encourage young people to adopt good hygiene and housekeeping routines by the use of simple financial or activity rewards. Young people say that this helped to motivate them in the first place, but that they like to keep the home clean and tidy. Staff work closely with social workers, to ensure that young people who have recently moved to semi-independent accommodation are confident in their new home, and understand they can seek further support from staff if this is necessary. This helps young people to be successful in adapting to their new adult lives.

Staff promote contact between young people and significant adults, and contact plans are clearly recorded on individual files. Staff have forged positive relationships with parents by ensuring they are kept up to date on the care and safety of the young people. Working in partnership with parents increases the chances of continuity of care when young people visit their home area.

The staff team reflects a broad range of age, cultural background and identity. This mix underpins a home that values diversity in young people, and enables young people to feel that they can make choices according to their preferences and identity in a safe and supportive environment.

Keeping children and young people safe **good**

Since the last inspection, the home has restored a sense of calm and control; consequently, young people feel safe and secure. This has been achieved through improving the admissions procedure and the manager's ability to recognise and act when the home cannot safeguard all. For example, the home will take necessary action, such as declining or terminating a placement to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people, staff and local community. The manager has worked hard at re-establishing positive relationships with neighbours through liaison and practical support, including assisting with the clearing of their gardens.

Quality collaborative community working with neighbours, safeguarding partners, and young people encourages excellent working relationships where confidence and trust is developed. This heightens the protection of young people and stability of placements.

Incidents of missing from care remain high for some young people. This behaviour exposes them to significant levels of risk, such as potential child sexual exploitation, alcohol and substance misuse, and offending behaviour. Staff make robust efforts to keep in contact with missing young people and encourage their safe return. Previous inconsistencies in responding to safeguarding matters have been addressed. Staff benefit from training, supervision, mentoring and regular team meetings. Effective working between the manager and quality assurance and safeguarding lead has resulted in improved staff development. Staff have a good working knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures, and are able to identify risks and signs of abuse. Knowledgeable and confident staff are more able to promote safety, challenge risk taking behaviour and thus increase the security and wellbeing of young people.

Risk assessments are clear, comprehensive, and reflect young people's complex needs and challenges. Assessments include specific targets and actions that are linked with other care plans and therefore enhance continuity of care. Staff are proactive in ensuring that all agencies are fully updated and working towards the same plan and outcomes. They instigate and attend multiagency strategy meetings where risk assessments are reviewed, actions agreed and clear lines of accountability defined. This leads to effective multiagency working which is crucial to safeguarding practice.

Numbers of young people living in the home have reduced, and there is improved matching of those who live there. Through additional training and support, staff say they now feel empowered and supported to deal with challenging behaviour; they are encouraged to reflect and learn from previous and current incidents. This has led to a more proactive approach to behaviour management. The use of restraint and restrictive sanctions has significantly reduced. Young people are encouraged to explore a range of methods to resolve conflict. Staff use positive role modelling, and reinforcement to encourage young people in self-reflection. Staff are embracing change and have clearly benefited from this period of calm, which enables them to consolidate their learning and pull together as a team; thus making their

safeguarding practice more coordinated and successful.

There have not been any complaints or allegations since the last visit. Close collaborative working between staff, managers and the organisation's quality assurance lead has created clearer and more transparent procedures. Staff discuss minor issues with young people, to prevent matters escalating into crisis. Young people know how to make a complaint and the young person's guide gives appropriate information and sign posting to services which can support them, including Ofsted and other advocacy providers.

Appropriate checks are undertaken on all staff prior to them starting at the home, this ensures only suitable and qualified people are providing care to the young people. All staff have acquired or are soon to undertake multi-disciplinary safeguarding training, at a level appropriate to their roles and responsibilities. Staff are enthusiastic about this training and report it to be 'enlightening'.

Staff learning is evident, for example, in improved responses to young people who go missing from the home, or who experience relationship difficulties in and out of the home. Records show that staff demonstrate a greater understanding of the vulnerabilities of young people arising from their past experiences, and this helps them to engage young people in finding simple steps to make improvements in their lives.

Leadership and management

good

An experienced and qualified interim manager, who has applied to register with Ofsted, manages the home. They are working with senior managers, new quality assurance leadership appointees and a committed staff team, to deliver good quality care to young people. The progress the home has made is evident in improved outcomes for young people. A number of areas of improvement are evident; managers have taken action against all previous requirements and recommendations. Overall, this has improved young people's experience of living in the home, and as a result, they have made good progress in many areas of their lives.

This includes revised placement matching and risk assessment procedures in the home, improved staff training, supervision and communication systems, revised care planning tools that arise from consultation with all stakeholders, and effective behaviour support plans and approaches. In addition, senior managers have engaged very effectively in joint professional review of structures and systems to ensure that when necessary, there is clear consultation and information-sharing about the risks and vulnerabilities facing young people. Equally, managers have identified with the host authority and the local police, effective partnership structures that promote and protect the safety and welfare of all living and working in the home and local community.

Managers have revised the Statement of Purpose, to provide detailed and measureable procedures to be followed before young people are identified to live in the home. This includes capacity for emergency placements. However, the manager will use links with the police, and sufficient intelligence gathering, to assess all the information available about young people's needs, and the capacity of the home to keep them safe and help them progress. Senior managers are conducting briefings with placing authorities, to ensure they understand the revised parameters for communication about young people, particularly that appropriate paperwork, arising from planning and review of young people's needs, accompanies them in their placement. Other professionals that work with the home, such as youth justice workers, social workers and police community liaison officers say that from past experience, they have every confidence in the capacity and skills of the new manager to sustain open and transparent communication with them, to ensure young people progress during their time in the home.

Monitoring of the home is based on principles of observation of direct care practice and scrutiny and analysis of records, to assess outcomes for young people. The provider has appointed an independent visitor, who visits the home on their behalf, and produces an in-depth report on the quality of the experience of living in the home, particularly with regard to young people's safety and welfare. The visitor takes all necessary steps to secure the views of young people, and the manager is working with them, to help young people build good relationships with them. Although this is a new venture, the manager has found their early observations to be accurate and invaluable in supporting the development of the home.

Together with feedback from the organisation's quality manager, and their own revised and detailed monitoring tool, the managers have produced an aspirational, effective and realistic development plan for the home. This is already being implemented to good effect, through improved staff training, supervision and professional discussions that have elevated staff awareness of good practice. Any shortfalls in records for young people are identified and improved, to ensure that young people have contributed to those records, such as how they feel about any sanction that has been imposed. In turn, this has improved relationships in the home because young people feel their needs are being considered, and their opinions listened to.

Staff are competent, enthusiastic and caring, and work well together to promote young people's welfare and development. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of young people in the best possible way; including the support they need for activities. Team meetings take place regularly to allow the staff team to discuss the running of the home, to look at ways to improve the service they offer, to reflect on young people's progress and how best to support them.

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.