

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC053145
Inspector	Stella Lovie
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Partners in Care
Registered person address	Rouse House, 2 Wyther Lane Kirkstall Leeds West Yorkshire LS5 3BT
Responsible individual	Luiz Miguel Guilherme
Registered manager	Violet Dennison
Date of last inspection	06/03/2014

Inspection date	27/11/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	None

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Young people living in this home benefit from an enthusiastic staff group who demonstrate a commitment to meeting their needs and keeping them safe. As a result, young people make good progress in relation to their starting points most of the time. However, in recent months, some young people have lost a degree of momentum with their care planning as they move towards independence. This drift has impacted adversely on their outcomes in terms of education and health, despite robust efforts by the home to address the situation. That said, young people feel that their lives have improved since they have been at the home and they say they feel safe here.

Young people are able to build trusted and secure relationships with adults working at the home. They live in stable environments with consistency in their lives. Staff know the young people well and develop positive relationships with them. This protects young people and promotes their welfare. As a result, young people are able to develop an appropriate sense of permanence and belonging in the home. As one social worker commented: 'My young person is very positive about the home and really settled here. He has come on loads. I've got no concerns at all. He is definitely happy here. He's very positive about the carers, especially his key worker. His room is amazing – he has made it exactly how he wants it and he is so proud of it.'

Monitoring of young people's progress and development is good and the manager has a thorough understanding of the strengths of the home and areas for development. However some shortfalls are identified. One requirement and four recommendations are therefore raised in order to further drive forward improvement for young people and comply with regulations.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately run home is registered to accommodate three children or young people of either gender. It is registered to provide care for young people who may have behavioural or emotional difficulties. Lengths of stay may be short, medium or long term.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/03/2014	Interim	good progress
04/07/2013	Full	adequate
25/03/2013	Interim	good progress
07/11/2012	Full	adequate

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated there; with specific regard to adhering to holiday risk assessments re accommodation. (Regulation 11 (1) (a))	31/12/2014

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take

account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that where children no longer receive compulsory full time education, the home supports them to participate in further education, training or employment (NMS 8.9)
- ensure that all new staff are working towards the Diploma within 6 months of confirmation of employment (NMS 18.5)
- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually (NMS 19.6)
- ensure the registered person has a system in place to notify within 24 hours the persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events in accordance with Regulation 30. (NMS 24.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Young people develop positive bonds with experienced, motivated, well-supported staff who care about them and act as influential role models. This encourages them to aspire and improve their life chances. Young people are provided with easily accessible information about the children's home. This includes clarification about their rights and the expectations of them. This helps them to settle into their placements and understand how staff will look after them. Young people enjoy the benefits of a well-maintained and decorated home. They have comfortable bedrooms which they personalise according to taste. As a result, they feel rooted and valued within the home.

Young people are supported to learn appropriate levels of self-control and personal responsibility, both in terms of group living and on an individual level. This helps them to function effectively in a wide range of settings like school and the local community. Some young people are successful in keeping small pets at the home. This helps them to learn care and empathy skills. Young people enjoy the full attention of the manager and staff. The manager is clear about the need to 'invest' in young people, to help them to develop positive attachments and better manage their challenging behaviours. These outcomes are integrated into young people's placement plans, along with clear objectives to improve health, education and other outcomes such as contact with family. They are assisted through key working and more specialist interventions to develop an understanding of their lives, employ coping strategies and gain some resilience to adversity. As one parent confirmed: 'I'm very pleased with the home. It's always good there, staff are firm and consistent with my son. I've seen a massive improvement in him due to the structured routines.'

Most young people are fully engaged with their education which is testament to their emotional resilience. They have very good attendance and are progressing well in line with their abilities. As one young person said: 'I score the home 10 out of 10. It's brilliant here. All the staff are lovely. I think they've helped me get my behaviour good. They cook nice food and I now eat vegetables – I didn't eat any before I came here. I feel safe here. I am trusted to have free time out and I have local friends I see – some of them come to knock for me. Before I came here I hadn't been in full time school for two years and now I am in full time school. I really like it as well. Now it's just normal that I go to school.' However, some young people currently have no employment or education options and are resistant to staff advice about how to improve their situations. This does not bode well for their future social and economic well-being.

Young people are integrated into community life and are involved in activities that help them dispel stereotypical views about young people in care. They are actively encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviour. They use the resources within

the community as far as possible such as drama and rugby clubs. This promotes their independence and helps to build up a social network. Most young people engage regularly in sports and other active pursuits, and receive good quality advice and support to do so. This promotes their physical health and well-being. Some young people enjoyed a fantastic experience this year of a holiday abroad. It was linked with project work in relation to the holocaust. This provided them with both wonderful memories and promoted their education. It is unfortunate that the holiday was also linked with a significant safeguarding issue, though this did not detract from the positive benefit of the experience.

Young people enjoy generally good health because their health needs are effectively identified and services provided to meet them. They are encouraged and supported to attend routine and specialist appointments to ensure they remain fit and well. Staff provide young people with good information and guidance on a range of health and social issues including healthy eating, sexual health, the dangers of smoking, and alcohol and substance misuse. That said, some young people continue to smoke and occasionally use cannabis. This impacts adversely on their health, and causes difficulties in sustaining further education and work. Some young people have also engaged in very occasional bouts of anti-social behaviour in the community. This has led to one significant offence which again has potential to impact negatively on young people's future employment opportunities.

Young people are suitably prepared for a successful transition to adult life. They are supported to develop necessary life skills such as personal care, choosing the clothes they want to wear and helping to tidy shared spaces and their bedrooms. Young people develop skills around making drinks along with cooking and baking. These practical accomplishments help prepare them for living on their own. Young people are given good information about life outside care, especially in relation to their entitlements. Despite this, some young people struggle to accept the realities of what they need to do to be eligible for financial support. This potentially compromises their economic life chances and future accommodation options.

Quality of care

good

Young people enjoy high quality care in a home that closely replicates a nurturing family environment. Staff encourage secure attachments and build warm relationships with young people. Staff members are understanding, sympathetic, comforting, and consistent paying individual attention to each young person living in the home. As a result, young people enjoy highly positive and constructive relationships with staff. Young people say that it feels like it is a family and that they matter: 'This place is really perfect. It's so chilled and like a real family. They've helped me loads. I love it here. I like all the staff. They've very good at listening and helping me with things. It's a truly awesome place.' Equally, relationships between young people are supported and encouraged. Group living expectations are clear and conflict is well-managed. This helps to promote young people's sense of well-being

and belonging.

Placement plans are individually tailored for each young person, and are regularly reviewed and up-dated. They include clear measurable targets and outcomes, and fully involve the young people. Staff are clearly aware of the key focuses for each young person and what goals they are working towards. Throughout, young people are encouraged to make choices and see the consequences of their actions, both good and bad. Plans address young people's unique identity and cultural needs, and are mindful of young people as individuals with a unique background and personalities. This helps to develop trust, self-esteem and mutual respect. Staff are proactive in educating young people about social inclusion, and non-discriminatory behaviour and attitudes. Relevant individual, group and project work helps young people understand the diverse society they live within. This helps to counter the isolation of individuals by others and promotes tolerance.

Young people's views and opinions are listened to and this enables them to have a positive influence in the running of the home, and allows them to make a purposeful contribution. As a result, young people feel highly valued, well informed and fully involved in all aspects of their care. Young people's rights to inclusion and participation are central to how the home operates and this promotes effective communication within the home. Young people understand how to complain and feel able to do so. They can easily access an advocate, the Independent Reviewing Officer and the independent visitor who can provide the advice and support they need and pursue matters on their behalf if necessary. This promotes their sense of well-being.

Most young people have good attendance at school and are progressing well in relation to their starting points. Young people are continuing to achieve within education because the manager and staff work closely with educational settings and get the right help and support for them. Staff work hard to ensure that young people have a routine, are prepared, encouraged, praised and understand the importance of education. They are passionate about getting young people back into education and patiently encourage them every step of the way. While there are real success stories in this respect, some young people aged 16 and over are not currently in education, employment or training. This inhibits those young people's future life chances.

The home promotes a culture of achievement and learning. The smallest achievements are celebrated, giving young people a strong sense of personal development and fulfilment. Similarly, birthdays, gaining qualifications and obtaining awards are all celebrated and often involve parties to ensure important events are never forgotten.

There are good collaborative links with health professionals and other agencies. This allows helpful guidance and support to be provided when young people are most in need. For example, external professionals advise and treat in relation to matters such as sexual health, substance abuse and podiatry. However, some young people refuse

to engage with identified provision. This inhibits their ability to make progress in every aspect of their lives. The company has its own children's psychologist who visits the home regularly to discuss the young people's needs. This helps staff understand specific issues and the meaning behind presenting behaviours. For example, staff have benefited from a session on managing sexualised behaviour. Where appropriate, the home is proactive in seeking specialist cognitive assessments with a view to identifying the level of support young people will need when they leave the home.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people report a strong sense of safety and well-being in the home. They know who they can talk to if they have any concerns. They are confident that they will be supported and listened to, and that their concerns will be addressed. As one parent said: 'I am totally confident that they keep him safe and meet his needs. There's no bullying and I've no worries at all about the care he gets there.' Good staffing levels ensure that any potential episodes of bullying are identified and addressed immediately. There is a strong commitment by staff to tackle all types of bullying through initiatives and strategies that improve behaviour and increase awareness. This well-implemented approach means no young person experiences any form of bullying or discrimination from their fellow residents or staff.

Everyone involved in supporting the young people plays a role in ensuring young people stay protected from harm. This includes staff being confident in all areas of child protection and having the necessary knowledge and skills to keep young people safe. All staff attend training in safeguarding at an early stage in their employment and receive regular refresher training. Consequently, staff maintain their understanding of how to identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and how to manage and report child protection concerns. Strong links with other agencies give staff access to up-to-date advice and guidance so that everyday practice puts young people's welfare first. Environmental risk assessments and action to address any shortfalls ensure that young people live in a home that is safe and free from hazards.

Staff try to get the young people grounded in the realities of everyday life, but within as safe a context as possible. They constantly undertake and review risk assessments in accordance with need. This enables young people to be able to make mistakes safely on the grounds that they learn most from their mistakes.

On the whole safeguarding practice is good. However, one significant shortfall has been identified following a holiday. The manager identified this as a shortfall when staff and young people returned from the trip and addressed it appropriately with the staff concerned. There was no negative impact for children and a wonderful holiday was enjoyed by young people.

Staff are skilled at discussing with young people their areas of risk, behaviour,

responsibilities and how these are to be managed. As a result missing from home incidents are fairly low in frequency. When they do occur, staff go out on to the streets and known addresses to look for young people. They work closely with relevant agencies within local protocols to minimise the recurrence of such behaviour. This promotes young people's safety.

Young people are respected as emerging young adults. They enjoy cordial relationships with staff and respond positively to the calm, measured responses of the manager and staff. Young people benefit from incentives which recognise sustained positive interaction. Effective behaviour management strategies are used based on dialogue, negotiation and sensitive guidance from staff. This helps young people to work things out for themselves, make informed choices and take responsibility for their decision-making. Physical restraint is seldom used, along with only minimal and appropriate use of sanctions.

Robust and thorough vetting of new staff ensure that young people are appropriately safeguarded. Young people are involved in recruitment of new staff. Recruitment practices ensure that new staff members are the right fit for the existing team. There is close monitoring of their progress. This all helps to deter unsuitable people from having access to young people. Any concerns about young people's safety or well-being are always taken seriously and thoroughly investigated to a satisfactory outcome in collaboration with the relevant safeguarding agencies

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager has many years of relevant experience and is suitably qualified. She has significant credibility within her own organisation. This helps her to operate as a confident practitioner. She has sufficient control to practise with flexibility and an appropriate degree of autonomy. This has a positive impact on the care home by helping to build a sense of purpose in the role, which in turn helps to motivate people. She is well-supported by meetings with her area manager and by monthly peer manager meetings. These help to disseminate best practice reflect on bigger picture issues and solve problems.

The manager demonstrates a good understanding of the developmental issues for the home, and has plans in place to progress these. She gives strong messages to staff about driving forward improvements and sustaining that progress. She also encourages staff awareness of practice issues beyond the boundary of the home. She has promoted a culture of learning so that staff are constantly looking for where improvements can be made. There is a strong, collaborative team dynamic which ensures consistency in ways of working with young people.

The home benefits from a diverse staff team in terms of age, backgrounds and experience. Some staff are still quite new and at an early stage of learning the job, but they are all very enthusiastic. Staff report that they feel well-supported by the

manager and by the team ethos. They receive an appropriate level of structured supervision. However, not all staff have received their annual appraisals. This limits the manager's oversight of their performance and professional development. There is a good level of staffing to meet young people's needs. Staff have appropriate training provided to enable them to care safely for the young people. However, there has been some delay in placing staff on relevant courses to acquire their professional qualifications. This inhibits their effectiveness.

Robust monitoring by the manager and the independent visitor serves to quality assure and improve the care of the young people. Those monitoring arrangements provide careful scrutiny of practice and performance of the home, identifying areas for improvement. This ensures that practice is focussed on outcomes for young people. It provides an effective check for compliance with regulations and standards, ensuring that young people's needs are central to proceedings and they are safely cared for at all times. All significant events relating to the protection of young people are notified to the appropriate authorities by the manager. That said, there is sometimes delay in passing that information to the regulator. This impedes Ofsted in reviewing actions taken by the home in a timely way.

The statement of purpose defines the life and work of the home. This means that placing authorities and relatives are clear about how the home works and what to expect from the service. The manager ensures that the needs of the young people can be met through use of an impact assessment at point of referral, and before a young person crosses the threshold of the home. This avoids a situation arising where the "mix" of needs proves impossible to meet. The manager is also appropriately assertive with placing authorities to ensure that young people get the service they need when there is drift in care planning.

The manager makes very good use of monthly progress reports. They track young people's individual progress against their targets, and show the positive difference the home has made to young people's lives. No complaints have arisen since the last inspection. Effective communication between the home and parents ensure that parents feel confident that their concerns will be heard and acted upon. Young people's welfare, well-being and safety are promoted by this practice.

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.