

SC055153

Registered provider: Thunderbolt Mobile Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The service is privately owned and is registered to accommodate three young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It provides alternative accommodation from one to 52 weeks, which incorporates activity-based intervention work in order to offer an innovative programme for young people experiencing a period of difficulty or crisis, as written in the home's statement of purpose.

Locations will vary as young people will use a variety of accommodation and facilities including camping and bunkhouse facilities, caravans and cottages as well as a narrow boat and yacht as outlined in the home's statement of purpose.

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 November 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 23 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:

- Based on their starting points when first entering the home, young people usually make good progress in all areas of their lives.
- Removing young people at risk of going missing from home, child sexual exploitation and criminalisation from their usual environment, allows them to look at and consider alternative lifestyles that are more socially acceptable and keeps them safe.
- Staff are skilled in forming strong and trusting relationships with disaffected young people who often have a history of rejecting authority. The relationships that young people build with staff enables them to become fully involved in their daily programme and create achievable goals.
- Young people are introduced to a structured lifestyle that gives them boundaries to operate in and routines to follow. This provides them with a sense of security and safety, as well as developing and enhancing independence skills.
- Staff encourage young people to have a voice that enables them to feel confident, valued and respected. Their involvement in planned activities and education builds their social interactions and self-esteem.
- Arrangements with professional services ensure that young people's physical health, emotional, social and psychological well-beings are identified and met.
- All accommodation and each local area is risk assessed. Staff are proactive in raising young people's awareness of risks, particularly when they are on board the narrowboat or yacht.
- Young people who live a long way from home remain in touch with their family and friends. Transport is not an issue and supports young people and those significant in their lives to have agreed and planned contact.
- A service that is logistically complex is well organised and managed. Communication levels between the whole staff group are high, which leads to young people benefitting from a team centred approach from a stable staff team that provides a high standard consistency of care.
- The manager and her staff team are prepared to advocate on behalf of young people and challenge other professionals to ensure that young people receive the services that they provide.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Reflect on and evaluate working practices to ensure that the home moves forward and promotes continued progress, for example with the continued push to get newly recruited staff professionally qualified.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
27/06/2016	Full	Good
01/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
03/08/2015	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- All staff in a care role, including external agency or bank staff, must have the qualification in regulation 32(4) within the relevant timescale listed in regulation 32(5). (The Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the Quality Standards, page 53, paragraph 10.12),

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is a service that achieves considerable success in accommodating young people who are often disillusioned, unhappy and anti-authoritarian on admission. As they settle into a placement where all previous influences have been removed, they are given routine, structure and boundaries, which keeps them safe. The pressures of their previous lifestyle are removed, allowing them to think more clearly and be influenced by adults acting as good role models. As a result, young people invest in the plans in place for them, having been part of the planning process themselves. Many leave with a more positive outlook on life, being willing to adopt a more socially acceptable and safer lifestyle than the one they experienced previously. Time away also helps to repair broken or damaged relationships with family members.

Although the service does not suit all young people, most adapt and settle into their new surroundings and daily routines. They are accommodated in a variety of single occupancy facilities as they move around. A stable, dedicated staff group provides them with a high standard consistency of care. Young people are kept busy as they are introduced to new experiences and activities. Education is also built into the programme.

A young person spoke in depth about their time in the service, providing examples of the positive experiences and the not so positive ones due to issues in their personal life. They could recognise the positive relationships that have been built with most staff and have an honest appraisal of the issues still to be addressed. The conversation finished with the young person describing staff 'as my second family'. Another young person who had recently moved on wrote, 'The rules for mobile are very fair. I like the fact that if I engage well I get rewarded. The staff are always willing to listen and always take my opinions into consideration.'

Staff are skilled in developing relationships with young people, which remain strong even in times of challenge and disruption. Staff all invest in the service's culture and ethos, which is to support and be positive with young people rather than take a negative and punitive approach when tensions are high. A parent observed, 'Staff are very flexible and can adapt to need. If it breaks down or something doesn't work, they will readjust until she can cope. We appreciate staff do all they can. They never give up on her despite the challenges she throws them.'

Young people's needs are identified early and confirmed quickly after admission. They are then translated into good-quality planning documents, assessments of risk and strategies to address individual behaviour. These documents are reviewed and updated regularly, which keeps them current. They provide direction so that young people can embark on a programme of events that address all areas of their lives. These include stabilising behaviour, developing self-confidence, enjoying new experiences that turn into interests and hobbies, becoming engaged with their education, developing social networks and preparing for adulthood.

Education is built into the daily routine. The organisation has its own registered school and professional tutors who can educate young people either in school or within the accommodation they are staying in. Many young people arrive at the service having previously rejected education. Re-integration and engagement with education is carefully managed, with flexible educational packages put into place to meet need. The ultimate aim is for integration back into full-time education in school, and the service has a good track record of achievement regarding this. For example, following a failed attempt at full integration one young person is now attending the school on a daily basis. Attendance is high, with current educational achievement reflecting this.

Communication levels are high, underpinned by the strong relationships between young people and staff which promotes daily, ongoing consultation. Formal arrangements are also in place through weekly meetings. These cater for requests and suggestions to be made, along with making choices around food and activities. If decisions to requests made need further consideration, young people are kept well informed. They are also asked to contribute to the staff appraisal system by giving their views on the staff who look after them. This meaningful exercise gives young people confidence that their views and opinions are important and do matter.

Staff promote young people's health and well-being effectively. They are registered with community-based services at the point of admission that can meet their everyday health needs. Staff have the details of the services available in the areas travelled, should an emergency occur. More specialist services are accessed where necessary, with the company having the ability to bring in specialist services when required. Staff are trained to communicate using British sign language, and have access to sign language interpreters. This encourages and supports a young person in communication who has a hearing impairment.

Contact arrangements can be complex, but every encouragement is given to young people to repair and maintain relationships with those important to them. Distance is no object based on the flexibility of the service, which is comforting to those young people placed a considerable distance from their home areas. Staff will support and supervise contact or make suitable arrangements for young people's families to travel and stay overnight in suitable accommodation. This helps to ensure that regular contact is maintained. These arrangements are consistent with young people's contact agreements.

Young people are encouraged to remain engaged with any hobbies or interests they may have had previously. They are also introduced to new activities and encouraged to take up new interests, which helps to broaden their views and give them new experiences. For example, many young people leave the service with the new hobby of fishing. A comprehensive list of community-based facilities in all the areas frequented is available for staff. Some activities are planned to include an educational element, such as trips to museums and places of interest. During the inspection, photographs were viewed that showcase the range of activities young people experience. They also reflect and evidence the strong relationships created between young people and staff.

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

All accommodation used by young people is risk assessed along with the areas they visit. As the service is mobile, destinations for travel can be identified to meet the needs of young people. For example, destinations can be rural to help young people settle into the service following admission. For others there is a balance to be made as many young people, once settled, need to establish relationships and develop social networks with their peers. One young person spoke positively about a dance club they attend on a weekly basis which is helping to create positive relationships with other young people of a similar age and with similar interests.

The service has developed and maintains strong professional relationships with the external agencies charged with keeping young people safe. This covers the areas likely to be visited. When tested, safeguarding procedures have been found to be effective in keeping young people safe, generating a multi-agency response. Staff are familiar with and understand the safeguarding procedures, and recognise their own role and responsibilities in this area. All staff have received training in this field, which is refreshed regularly.

The management of behaviour is good. A relatively experienced and skilled staff team has the confidence to manage challenging and sometime destructive and aggressive behaviour well. They get to know a young person and understand why they may behave in a certain way. A parent spoken with commented, 'We know she can be very difficult and aggressive, but staff all put that behind them and appear to love her all the more.' A social worker, when commenting on staff, said, 'They are absolutely brilliant. They are on the ball, helpful and do a good job in keeping young people safe.'

Behavioural incidents, which include those requiring physical intervention, are managed effectively. Incidents are monitored and evaluated by senior staff. De-briefing sessions with young people and staff give opportunities to explore each incident to see if lessons can be learned and if each could have been handled differently. Senior staff monitor incidents effectively, looking for indicators, trends or patterns so that strategies to manage behaviour can be adapted appropriately. This helps to improve practice, aid consistency and reduce the number of incidents taking place.

Young people benefit from living in a non-punitive environment where rewards exceeds sanctions. For example, monthly figures recording both show that in every month this year rewards far outweigh the number of sanctions imposed. Young people confirm that they know how to make a complaint and to whom. Since the previous inspection, swift and decisive action has been taken by senior staff following any complaint made.

Plans and assessments of risk to cover incidents where young people go missing are in place. Local protocols along with the services own procedures are followed. Staff have details for all the areas where the service operates and can instantly alert the appropriate authorities in any area where a young person may go missing.

The recruitment and clearance procedures for new staff are thorough and meet with

regulatory requirement and current guidance. Longer serving staff are being re-checked regularly, which is deemed to be good practice. This ensures that young people are only being looked after by staff who have been suitably cleared and recruited.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The service benefits from having an experienced and suitably qualified registered manager who has been in post for over three years. She is well supported by an experienced deputy manager. They complement each other well. Following a company re-organisation, the service has in place a stable staff team that is dedicated to the service.

The organisation, management and daily operation of the service are totally child-focused. For example, staff work longer shifts than normal to enhance consistency. This also allows for the flexibility of the service to remain fluid so it can meet demand and need. Managers and staff work together cohesively, demonstrating a team-centred approach that benefits and enhances the consistency of care that young people receive. Staff morale is high, and as a visitor you immediately experience a happy, relaxed atmosphere, coupled with the warmth of the relationships that exist between young people and staff.

Staff say they feel well supported by the manager. Supervision and staff meetings are taking place with a good level of consistency, providing forums for staff to look at professional issues, agree on the management of the young people in their care and look at their own performance. Staff performance is formally appraised annually, with the views of young people taken into account. This is deemed as good practice.

Staff have access to a variety of training programmes, with clear expectations placed on them to complete the core staff training programme. They also have a route into becoming professionally qualified once probationary periods have been successfully completed. Other training is brought in when required. For example, staff have received training in deaf awareness and signing. More recently, they have completed training linked to the risk of radicalisation.

The internal monitoring of the service is good. The manager monitors and evaluates practice, which is critically analysed and used to highlight areas of strength and weakness. This transfers into the home's own development and workforce plan, with areas for future development clearly identified. External senior managers are active in monitoring the service and provide good support to the manager. External monitoring of the service takes place regularly each month. Reports are detailed, thorough and evaluative.

This is a well-established, specialised service that regularly proves to be successful for the right young people who can adapt to a different lifestyle. It is a service that looks for constant progress and improvement. For example, since the last inspection the manager has introduced a revised format for recording negative consequences and positives, along with an improved format for recording physical intervention. With the staff team,

she is working through the Quality Care Standards to give them greater insight and knowledge, and has also introduced team-building exercises.

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: SC055153

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Thunderbolt Mobile Limited

Responsible individual: Michael Fletcher

Registered manager: Nichola Fairhurst

Inspector

Graham Robinson, social care inspector

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