

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	25/10/2016
Unique reference number	SC061795
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Southern Adolescent Care Services Limited
Registered provider address	Room 8, Worth Corner, Turners Hill Road, Pound Hill, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 7SL

Responsible individual	Sharon Webster
Registered manager	Sharon Jenner
Inspector	Ruth Coler

Inspection date	25/10/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
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

SC061795

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Appropriate, positive relationships with young people are built from the time that they arrive at the home. This enables young people to engage with education, develop healthier lives and manage their behaviours better.
- The therapeutic approach of the home is used effectively. It is visible in staff practice on a daily basis and used innovatively to support good behaviour and develop young people's self-esteem.
- Safeguarding and child protection are embedded within the home's practices, which has resulted in young people being safer and improving safety for the local community as a whole.
- Risk assessment is well established and provides a strong foundation for protecting and promoting young people's safety and welfare.
- Leaders, managers and staff continually focus on young people's needs and how to support them to make progress no matter what the problems young people face.
- Leaders and managers drive forward the aims and objectives of the home. They have built a strong team that is interested in and ambitious for young people to do well and make progress.
- There are strong systems for staff support, which provide opportunities for learning about the young people and how the staff team can work together effectively.
- There are several areas for development which are addressed in the main body of the report. For example, improvements are recommended in relation to surveillance and more healthy diets for the young people.

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 persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that: (a) the privacy of children is appropriately protected; (b) children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and (c) any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— (i) is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; (ii) is necessary and proportionate; (iii) is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and (iv) allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c))	25/01/2017

Recommendations

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

- The registered persons should put into action the home's plan to enhance the available facilities for learning, therapeutic support and home study to enhance the educational provision at the home further. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)
- The registered person's reviews of the appropriateness and suitability of the home's location should include requests to relevant bodies for an update on information about the location of the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that they make best use of independent and internal monitoring to ensure continuous improvement. In particular, the manager should improve the Regulation 45 report so that their analysis summarises more effectively their views of the evidence collated. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.01)

- The registered person should ensure that the information set out in the statement of purpose fully outlines the specific work of this children's home as well as more corporate aims of the organisation overall. This is so that social workers can more easily decide if this particular home is the right one for a specific child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.6)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. In particular, that a policy is implemented regarding the use of ligature cutters. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered provider should continue to develop their practice to support young people, changing any negative behaviours in respect of their nutrition and healthy diets. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.18)
- The registered person should continue to develop and maintain effective working relationships with police services, which will improve working relations with all areas of the local police service. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 38, paragraph 8.5)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is one of three children's homes operated by Southern Adolescent Care Services Limited. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for six young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties on a planned or emergency basis.

The home is supported by an education team and qualified therapists. The therapists provide a range of services to young people as a group and when needed to individuals.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/01/2016	Full	Good
14/07/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
29/01/2015	Full	Good
05/08/2014	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Before moving in, young people receive well-organised information which helps them to understand the care and support that they will receive. Each young person's guide is personalised by adding the information that they need, such as who their key worker will be. The use of staff photographs helps young people to remember who the staff are when they arrive. This assists them to settle at the home and be able to refer to something if they need to. A strength of staff practice is how well young people's individual needs are explored, identified and met. Care is taken to get to know each young person to understand what they like to do and what needs they have. Staff work as a team to identify and reflect on young people's strengths as well as their risks. For example, one young person was able to settle more quickly at night because they were provided with pictorial prompts of their bedtime routine. This young person was also struggling to read so the bedtime routine included staff reading to them. The organisation's education team helped to find age-appropriate books which met the young person's age and reading ability. Education is prioritised and tailored to fit young people's individual circumstances and needs. In-house education is available but the main aim is for young people to attend school and not to be home educated. Most young people attend school on a regular basis. Where education plans need changing, staff work with the young person and placing authority to ensure that new plans are made as quickly as possible. Where young people do not agree with decisions made, they are offered access to advocacy services and supported to use these should they wish to do so. Any decisions take account of young people's views. Therapeutic ways of working enable young people to understand how their behaviours affect them and make changes which help them to progress. For example, one young person now manages their anger more effectively by talking about their concerns rather than using aggression to respond to situations which they find difficult. Young people are investing in the home and choosing to accept the support that they receive. One social worker said, 'This has been the longest place this young person has lived in their entire life. I have seen their behaviour change for the better during the time they have been here.' Young people's health needs are generally met well. They attend regular health appointments and are encouraged to improve their health through regular exercise. However, while menus reflect young people's food preferences these are not effectively monitored to ensure that a balanced diet is consistently provided. There is a lack of clarity about the foods that young people are eating, new tastes they may be acquiring or if they do not like particular foods that they have tried.	

This is especially important for some young people who have erratic eating patterns and prefer to eat limited types of mainly carbohydrate-based foods. The home's management team had commenced addressing how healthy foods could be introduced. This is welcomed as an important development which would benefit by a more consistent focus from the staff.

Staff are interested and inquisitive about the young people that they care for. Opportunities to discuss what is important to young people as well as things that they consider they need to progress are sought out by staff. For instance, young people have elected to use shopping trips to learn about managing their money as well as to improve their safety while out. Such practice demonstrates individually tailored ways of working but there are examples where this approach is not followed. For example, some young people have restrictions on who they can telephone and therefore all young people have to ask to make any calls. This compromises some young people's ability to make calls in complete privacy.

Staff continually reinforce young people's positive behaviours through praise and rewards. This practice encourages young people's development of self-worth. They learn to understand that changing their behaviours brings positive benefits. They learn about consequences. For example, by taking responsibility for damage caused to the home and actively participating in its repair. Staff focus upon the positive elements of young people taking responsibility and putting things right.

Space is at a premium in this home. The layout does not easily allow for quiet spaces and different areas where young people can meet in smaller groups. This sometimes increases the likelihood that young people become involved in each other's difficult behaviours. This is heightened when all of the young people are present for long periods, such as school holidays. The proposed changes to create an additional communal space out of the education room and a multi-purpose space for education and meetings from the second office are good developments. These changes are aimed at enabling the young people to have a greater array of spaces to meet staff and to have opportunities to spend time with each other in smaller groups.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people's safety and welfare are central to staff's everyday thinking about the care that they provide. Staff knowledge of child protection and safeguarding covers a wide range of subjects, such as child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and child protection. They are able to anticipate issues which might occur and make links between young people's behaviours and the safeguarding concerns that these might relate to. Staff took a key role in identifying local safeguarding issues and providing evidence to the police. This resulted in a police investigation into local child sexual exploitation concerns. Such practice ensures that the home	

helps to protect the local community as well as the young people in its care. This work was commended by an officer of the local missing child and child sexual exploitation unit.

Individual risk assessments are clear and regularly updated when necessary. Visual representation of changes, by using a colour-coded system in risk assessments, assists staff in recognising when young people's behaviours are diminishing and when these are increasing. This enables staff to quickly identify changes to risk, make plans to reduce them, to recognise which strategies are working and what progress the young people are making.

Staff training focuses on the issues that staff may face in the event of young people with seriously worrying behaviours moving into the home. This has included training in the use of ligature cutters. Although staff know what to do, there is no written policy or procedure on the use of these implements. This leaves staff and young people vulnerable.

Young people are protected by staff who think and act appropriately in response to health and safety concerns, such as fire and internet access. Health and safety checks are regularly conducted and any issues are dealt with quickly. However, safety hazards in the garden have not always been identified, such as a trip hazard from a washing line post. The manager took action during the inspection to alert staff that they must be more vigilant in reviewing safety hazards and arranged immediate action to improve safety in the garden. Young people enjoy the benefits of using the internet. Appropriate monitoring and filtering systems enable young people to safely explore while ensuring that staff can address any inappropriate use immediately. This educative approach is teaching young people to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe online.

Young people enjoy exploring the local area. Staff use the location risk assessment, which provides a wealth of information about what helped to keep young people safe in the community and what did not. Some of the detail has lapsed, for example, the information provided by the police and youth offending team is from 2014. It is recommended that this document is updated to maintain its currency and benefit.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager is appropriately qualified and leads and manages the home well. Her commitment, knowledge and focus on young people are commended by external professionals and staff. Senior managers of the company are effectively involved in the strategic development of the service and oversight of the young people's care. They attend the home regularly and hold frequent meetings with the managers of all three	

homes that they operate to discuss both the operation of the services and individual plans for young people. Appropriate action has been taken in respect of the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection in January 2016.

Leaders and managers have developed a very clear, easy to read statement of purpose. The focus of the content is the overarching needs of the young people. However, information about the specific needs that this home caters for is missing. Potential placing authorities could be unclear about the home's ability to meet particular needs, which could result in an appropriate referral not being made.

Regular monitoring of the quality of care is conducted by the registered manager. The six-monthly reports produced are full of detail but contain minimal analysis and conclusions. This missing element restricts the manager's ability to have a wider understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses and to have a clear strategy and rationale for the home's development plan and priorities.

New staff are recruited subject to thorough vetting and checks. Their positive experience as an employee creates good staff retention which in turn, gives security and reliable routines to the young people. Several staff have been in post for a number of years. One staff member returned this year to full-time employment after trying a new career. They said that they returned because of their interest in the work and the support and development provided by the company.

Sufficient staffing numbers ensure that each shift is usually permanent staff or those from other children's homes that the company owns. This provides young people with care and support from staff who know them well and who understand the ethos, purpose and day-to-day running of the home.

Forums such as team meetings effectively support staff to manage issues of working with the young people and the needs that they have. Staff confirm that they feel valued and supported for their contribution to the work that they do. Some staff gave some excellent examples of the personal support which they had been given by managers and the company as a whole.

Staff receive good-quality supervision and appraisal. Managers maintain an excellent learning culture for the staff as well as the young people. They use many and varied opportunities to explore and discuss the care and support that staff give to the young people. For example, a staff team meeting explored how to manage and respond to young people's behaviours and recognised and rewarded staff practice. This attitude to ongoing training and development results in a knowledgeable staff team which is inquisitive about, and focused upon, meeting the young people's needs. 73% of the staff team possesses the level 3 diploma. The remaining staff members are scheduled to start.

Positive relationships are built with the appropriate outside agencies, such as social workers and the police missing person's unit. Working relationships with other parts of the police force have been less productive, based upon unclear

communication and information sharing. Improved dialogue is necessary to ensure that this partnership fully protects young people when they engage in challenging behaviours and the police are called.

Young people's records and plans are well kept, respectfully written and monitored to ensure that they are up to date. This enables young people to have a clear understanding of their progress and what happened during the time that they lived here should they wish to read these in the future.

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 looked after children 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 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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