

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC061795
Inspector	Kevin Whatley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Southern Adolescent Care Services Ltd
Registered person address	Room 8, Worth Corner Turners Hill Road, Pound Hill CRAWLEY West Sussex RH10 7SL
Responsible individual	Sharon Denise Jenner
Registered manager	Sarah Jane Elizabeth Chaston
Date of last inspection	05/08/2014

Inspection date	29/01/2015
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Previous inspection	declined in effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Young people receive good levels of support and guidance to encourage them to make progress in all aspects of their lives. The quality of care provided is good with young people saying they feel safe and looked after and having benefitted from living at the home. Positive and meaningful relationships with staff assist young people to improve feelings of poor self-esteem, self-worth and confidence.

A comprehensive approach to care planning, assessment and review results in individualised care programmes which meet the specific and changing needs of each young person. These provide a detailed guide for staff who follow them in practice.

Young people are kept as safe as possible with appropriate strategies introduced to reduce their risk taking behaviours. For a good number of young people this has meant reducing the occasions they place themselves at risk. However other young people do not make such progress and despite the efforts of staff continue to engage in risky behaviours. The home experienced a particularly unsettled period during the autumn of last year. Such challenging behaviour has dissipated over the past two months with the home being much more settled and relaxed.

The management of the home place the needs of young people at the forefront of practice. Managers appreciate the weaknesses of practice and display aspirations to

build on it's strengths. The three requirements made at the last inspection have been met. One recommendation is made on this occasion. This shortfall does not place young people at risk of harm.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The setting is one of two homes operated by the same private organisation. It accommodates six young people on a planned or emergency basis. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/08/2014	Interim	declined in effectiveness
27/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
24/06/2013	Full	good
06/02/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- The staff group who are in day-to-day contact with young people includes staff of both genders whenever possible (NMS 17.10)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people live in an environment where the importance of developing positive relationships is a focus of care. In general young people make good progress during their stay at the home, a few make less progress. Some young people make significant progress in reducing their risk taking behaviours. As a result young people develop improved levels of confidence and self-worth and gain greater insight into their own vulnerabilities. Young people say they enjoy living in the home and say staff are, 'lovely'.

Young people benefit from an environment where learning is a part of the daily routines. Attendance levels can vary but are reasonable and usually increase considerably once young people have settled into the home. Young people who have previously struggled to attend education are now attending regularly and making considerable progress in their learning and development. Young people new to the home who arrived without a current educational placement are quickly engaged by staff in the importance of learning. The home offers an in-house education programme for those not able to access more mainstream schooling. These young people receive a targeted on-site programme that harnesses their skills and gets them used to the structures and expectations of the home. For example combining self-care skills and activities as an education package. This pro-active approach ensure the routines of the week revolve around education, learning and development and ultimately improves levels of confidence.

Young people have their medical health care needs met well. Young people often arrive at the home presenting with a range of complex health problems or issues. These are assessed and responded to. The availability of psychological support and intervention assists staff to provide a holistic approach to address the emotional well-being of young people.

Young people are supported by staff to maintain contact with families and others of importance to them. This approach ensures young people can continue to build and maintain positive contact with significant people in their lives and promotes understanding of those important to them. Social workers praised the efforts of staff in helping support young people with contact visits and the issues these can create. Young people are able to make and receive calls in private and did not raise any concerns about contact arrangements.

Young people are provided with good levels of support and guidance to prepare them for transitions away from the home. Independence needs are considered from the point of admission notably where the young person is expected to move on to more semi-independent living situations. Planning involves close liaison with families/carers and social workers. Young people are supported to develop life-skills during their stay

at the home. This includes personal care, washing, ironing and learning to plan, budget for and cook some meals.

Quality of care

good

The quality of care is good. Relationships between young people and staff are generally positive with young people stating that that, 'staff are always there to talk to you and help.' Staff display a sound understanding of each young person's needs and how these should be addressed. This means that when issues arise such as young people being distressed or upset staff are able to respond in a thoughtful and calm manner which enables meaningful relationships to develop. Social workers say, 'staff provide consistent care...staff are committed to helping the young people'.

A range of avenues are in place to promote the voice of young people. Their views are sought on a regular basis through young persons meetings as well as within key work sessions. These sessions include tackling issues such as peer group dynamics and the pressures of living together. Young people in the home were seen to communicate openly in an atmosphere where they have their views heard. Recent decisions made involving young people include menu planning and forthcoming activities.

Young people are aware of the complaints system within the home. Information is given to them on admission which includes details regarding access to independent advocacy services. Complaints made by young people are dealt with swiftly and appropriately; none of these related to the quality of care or of feeling unsafe. No significant concerns or complaints were expressed by young people during the inspection.

A comprehensive care planning process focuses on the individual needs of young people. A holistic approach results in detailed assessments of need being completed that are then incorporated into plans of care. Plans are drawn up in consultation with young people, their parents/carers and those responsible for them. The subsequent strategies and intervention programmes assist staff in caring for young people which is further underpinned by specific training. As a result a majority of young people make progress. In some cases progress is significant given their starting points. For example in self-care skills and engaging in education after many years of non-attendance.

The progress of young people is routinely assessed and analysed through a robust system of review. This includes regular input by managers to ensure that care plans are being consistently applied in practice by staff. The regularity of this process also enables the effectiveness of particular strategies to be considered and amended where necessary. Young people are fully supported and encouraged to contribute

their views with high numbers of them participate in statutory reviews.

Young people receive good levels of health care with particular emphasis on meeting their emotional and psychological well-being. All required health care needs are implemented such as routine medical appointments and the appropriate storage and administration of medicines. Young people receive age appropriate sexual health advice and guidance from health care specialists. All aspects of care planning and intervention place emotional well-being as a guiding principle of practice. The home utilise the services of the organisations therapist who provides direct support to young people should they require this. They also provide advice and guidance to staff and play an active role in reviews of care. Young people are registered at the local GP surgery and good liaison with external professionals such as community mental health teams enable young people to receive specific intervention programmes. Staff promote healthy lifestyles including regular exercise and are pro-active in encouraging young people to participate in a number of pursuits including swimming and bowling

Young people enjoy a range of activities that meet their own wishes and that of the group. The enthusiasm of staff results in high levels of engagement and participation from young people in a home that feels active and energised.

Young people are provided with a good standard of accommodation. Some areas of the home have been decorated since the last inspection and young people state that they are pleased with the environment and feel comfortable. Young people are encouraged to personalise their own areas and choose the décor of their rooms.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

The home is adequate at keeping young people safe. Young people say that they feel safe and well looked after. Staff are trained in safeguarding with the home taking a preventative stance with any issues which may indicate a child protection concern. A suitable recruitment process ensures only staff who work with young people have been deemed suitable to do so.

The specific emotional and behavioural needs of young people are assessed in detail prior to their arrival. Staff are fully aware of the risks young people may pose to themselves or others and the strategies needing to be implemented to reduce this further. Risk assessments focus on key areas of concern such as self-harm, running away from care and sexual exploitation. These provide a clear guide and reduction/management strategy for staff who subsequently follow them in practice.

The home has a zero tolerance approach toward instances of bullying. No young person raised concerns that bullying was a problem in the home. The organisation have increased their focus on bullying type behaviours and through their therapist have devised bespoke workshops aimed at raising awareness for young people and staff alike. Despite some young people not always getting on with each other staff

intervene appropriately and seek to use conflict resolution sessions to bring them together to resolve their differences.

The approach toward addressing risk taking behaviours ensures young people receive appropriate advice and guidance in keeping themselves safe. The home networks appropriately with all relevant agencies including the police. This has been particularly useful for young people who place themselves at risk of sexual exploitation when away from adult supervision. When young people leave the home without permission staff take appropriate actions to locate them in line with specific risk reduction strategies. This approach ensures young people are provided with clear messages that their wellbeing is of paramount concern. When young people return to the home they are given support to reflect on the risks they are placing themselves in and indeed their own vulnerabilities. One social worker stated that, '(Name of young person) has made significant progress since being here in reducing episodes of self-harm and absconding'. Although such interventions are taking place they are not always effective in reducing the risky behaviours of all young people. While a majority of young people make progress in their ability to keep themselves safe a few continue to display concerning behaviours including running away and substance misuse.

Young people live in a home where appropriate behaviour is encouraged and expected. Each young person has individualised targets to achieve such as attending school and reducing levels of negative behaviour. For the most part young people make good progress in achieving these. However despite staff encouraging them to behave well there have been occasions when young people have engaged in offending behaviours, notably in the local community. The vast majority of these incidents occurred during a short period last year and included young people being arrested and charged with serious offences. A number of these young people have since moved on while others have been assisted to adopt a more socially acceptable way of life.

An innovative approach toward the giving of sanctions provides young people with meaningful opportunities to give something back rather than be penalised in a punitive manner. Young people explained the use of positive contribution time as a daily response to inappropriate behaviour or attitude. For example if a young person swears or threatens a member of staff they are encouraged, when calm, to spend a few minutes helping to do a chore around the home such as washing up. This in turn assists young people to consider their actions, spend time with staff and consider why they had acted in such a way. This has resulted in far fewer sanctions being given with young people seeing it as a positive part of living in the home. Young people said the approach, 'is fair...and helps me think about the reasons I lost it'.

Behaviour seen during the inspection was very good with the quality of relationships between staff and young people appearing respectful. Young people who had not always gotten on well are provided with consistent messages from staff as to the most appropriate way to live together. This has led to improved relationships and a

greater appreciation of difference.

The culture of the home focuses on de-escalation and communication as a core aspect of care. As a result the use of restraint is low. All staff are trained in physical intervention and only ever apply it when absolutely necessary. On the few occasions restraints are used good records are kept which provide an accurate account of events including reasons for restraint to be used. These are suitable scrutinised by managers and used to inform future practice and learning.

Health and safety is given a suitable priority with all required checks and tests being completed, ensuring the well-being of all who live and work in the home. Fire drills are carried out regularly with fire-fighting equipment being routinely serviced.

Leadership and management

good

Management of the home is good. The manager was registered with Ofsted in June of last year. She is experienced and suitably qualified to run the home. The Registered Manager has appropriately high expectations of staff practice and conveys a desire to learn from experience and build on improvements made since the last inspection. She acknowledges that some of the young people admitted for short periods of time last year had a significantly detrimental impact on the home in general. Since then there has been a steady improvement with the home being generally settled in recent months. The Registered Manager accepted a few areas of practice could be improved further and is clearly determined to ensure this is achieved. Positive comments were received from placing social workers which confirmed the commitment shown by the home in supporting young people to make progress. For example a social worker noted, 'the home are behind us every step of the way...a good solid placement'.

The Registered Manager and her management team are mindful of the challenges presented by the young person group. They also accept the home has experienced some change in recent months within the dynamics of young people which has not always resulted in a settled atmosphere. In particular last year when some young people were committing offences in the community and home itself. However decisive actions were taken and as a result the home has settled much more in recent weeks. Young people are now more accepting of boundaries and in doing so have improved relationships with staff and each other.

Appropriate monitoring processes are in place which ensures standards of care are routinely assessed. The Registered Manager completes regular reviews with her reports providing a retrospective and detailed assessment of the home and in particular the progress of each young person. The reports help the management team to confirm the strengths of service provision and evaluate areas where more emphasis may be required to improve outcomes. Regulation 33 reports are completed monthly which provide a further review of care from a more independent

perspective and include the views of young people, parents, carers and social workers.

A suitable number of staff are available day and night to meet the needs of young people. A slight shortfall in the amount of permanent staff has not created any significant problems. Full time staff work additional shifts when required and are further supported by a small group of regular bank staff; there is no use of agency staffing. A vast majority of staff are female. The Registered Manager confirmed that there has been difficulty in recruiting male staff but that this is something she is very aware of. Although not seeming to cause any issues there is currently a gender imbalance of staff. One young person said this was not a major problem but they would prefer more male staff around.

The commitment of staff is clear and results in young people being looked after consistently by adults who they know well. Staff commented they are very well supported by the management team and receive regular formal supervision alongside on-going support from each other with morale said to be 'really good'. Interactions between staff and young people were generally seen to be positive with a sense that staff really care about the work they undertake.

Training and induction programmes provide staff with appropriate opportunities to learn and develop their skills. Staff receive all the necessary compulsory training as part of their induction and probation periods which includes child protection. A number of staff have obtained the required care awards, while all others are due to undertake it.

Three requirements were made at the last inspection. These have all been met. The level of offending type behaviours has reduced since the autumn with far fewer occasions when the police have needed to be called to the home. No significant issues of bullying have occurred with no young person raising concerns that bullying is rife. The whole staff team and young person group have engaged in bespoke bullying workshops with the idea of mutual respect being far more evident. In essence the efforts of staff has culminated in a home that in general has settled considerably.

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.