

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC062248
Inspector	Marina Tully
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	Caroline Susan Stack
Date of last inspection	18/02/2014

Inspection date	15/10/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has not been any enforcement action taken in respect of this home since the last inspection.

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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Children and young people benefit from living in a home where their care is personalised to their individual and diverse needs. They are highly respected and feel valued by staff and each other. Children and young people are therefore confident, happy and develop a positive self-view.

Staff are dedicated and show unconditional positive regard to children and young people in their care. Their hard work and commitment is making a noticeable difference in all aspects of children and young people's lives. High quality care plans and risk assessments provide good guidance to staff in respect of meeting need and minimising harm.

Children and young people develop quality attachments with staff and each other. They have access to a range of services to ensure their diverse needs are being effectively addressed. Children and young people feel safe and are given good opportunities and support to have their say.

The home is run by a strong, committed and experienced manager who has children and young people's welfare at the centre of her practice. The manager and staff are

aware of the home's strengths and the action needed to secure improvement and continue development.

The good practice recommendations raised at this inspection will build on the existing good work demonstrated in the home. The recommendations are in relation to: young people being linked into activities in the local community; decisions/actions being effectively fed back to children and young people; staff training on supervising contact; local authority care plans being held on children and young people's files.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home offers care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is one of several owned by a private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/02/2014	Interim	good progress
19/07/2013	Full	good
14/01/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
09/07/2012	Full	good

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):

- ensure children understand how their views have been taken into account, and where their wishes are not acted upon, they are helped to understand why (NMS 1.2)
- ensure children and young people pursue individual interests and hobbies. This includes taking part in a range of activities, including leisure activities within the community (NMS 7.2)
- ensure staff have appropriate training, supervision and support if they are required to supervise and facilitate contact (NMS 9.2)
- ensure effective sharing of information held in the home's records about the child, specifically in relation to local authority care and placement plans being up-to-date and held on the children's files. (NMS 22.7)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Children and young people make measurable progress in all aspects of their lives. They are confident, secure and self-assured. This is because they have good knowledge and understanding of their backgrounds and life journey. Children and young people have a strong sense of identity and feel respected and accepted for who they are. As a result they are able to form and sustain positive attachments and develop emotional strength and resilience.

Children and young people benefit from having access to a range of health services to ensure their physical and emotional health is promoted. They attend all routine health appointments and are linked in with specialist health services and professionals when necessary. For example, adolescent mental health services and the provider's in-house therapist work with young people and staff to promote better outcomes in emotional health. Consequently, children and young people have greater insight into their feelings and behaviour and are enabled to regulate their emotions more effectively. Furthermore, children and young people benefit from staff being supported by therapist to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to meet their emotional needs.

Behaviours which impact on children and young people's health, such as smoking, alcohol and drug misuse are minimal. Children and young people are made aware of the risks associated with such behaviours and therefore make informed choices. Children and young people benefit from staffs encouragement, guidance and support to reduce any behaviour that could impact on their health.

Educational outcomes greatly improve from the start of placement. This is down to the home placing education as a high priority. Young people are ambitious and have clear plans for their future careers; taking the necessary steps to realise their goals. Young people are working towards vocational careers in health and social care and draw on their own life experiences to support their learning and development. This is reflected in young people's comments 'I want to come back and work in this home, they taught me a lot, they have done a good job with me.'

Children and young people benefit from maintaining quality contact with their families. Parents visit the home and give positive feedback on how they are supported during contact visits. Quality contact enhances children and young people's sense of identity and enables them to maintain a sense of belonging with significant people. A shortfall was in relation to staff not receiving appropriate training in supervising contact. They are not therefore fully prepared or equipped to manage potential difficult situations that may arise during contact.

Young people are extremely well prepared for moving onto adulthood. They have

quality transition plans and are supported to develop all of the necessary life skills needed for independence. Young people on pathway plans have the opportunity to live semi-independently in the homes independent unit. This provides young people with a great opportunity to test their independence skills and develop their confidence in a safe and supported environment. Young people on pathway plans are confident and have acquired excellent skills to care for themselves. For example, as well as acquiring the basic skills of cooking, shopping and budgeting some are also taking driving lessons.

Quality of care

good

The home provides a high standard of care to children and young people. Staff have nurtured positive, warm relationships within the home. This is reflected in the children and young people's comments 'I would grade the home as outstanding because we have a lovely bunch of staff and a lovely bunch of kids'.

Children and young people learn to manage their behaviour in a more constructive way. They achieve this through staff's consistent and empathetic approach to addressing negative behaviour. Staff follow clear and comprehensive behaviour management plans which offer effective guidance and strategies on how to deal with challenges. Difficult behaviours are effectively addressed with young people in individual key work sessions and when appropriate during young people's meetings. This ensures that young people are reflecting on their actions and learning how their behaviour impacts on themselves and others. Consequently, young people demonstrate good empathy and care towards each other. This is reflected in the peaceful and calm atmosphere within the home observed during this inspection.

Staff support children and young people to get involved in the running of the home. For example, young people's meetings are regularly held to give them opportunities to participate in decision making. Records from these meetings demonstrate that children and young people assert their views, wishes and feelings and feel confident to raise any issues with staff. However, records did not reflect what action had been taken to address the issues raised. Furthermore, not all young people feel that they are given explanations as to why certain management decisions or actions are made. This was raised during inspection with the manager and staff. They recognised this as a weakness and are committed to continuing to improve how they feedback decisions to children and young people in the future.

Children and young people's bedrooms are personalised and reflect their unique personalities, taste and interests. This enhances their sense of belonging and makes them feel at home.

Complaints are rare and children and young people know how and feel able to report any grievances to staff. When complaints are made they are followed up appropriately and in line with the home's complaints policy. Children and young

people report that they trust staff and in the main they feel listened to.

Children and young people are encouraged to participate in the local community. For example, they go out for meals together as a group, shopping trips and when safe and appropriate have free time with their friends. Children and young people from other geographical areas develop good links in the community and choose to remain in the area when they leave care. This demonstrates that they are making positive links and feel part of the local community. Some children and young people who are new to the home have not yet accessed any activities in the local area. This is because staff feel they need to settle into the home and new environment before they can safely introduce them to activities in the community. The manager and staff recognise the importance of children and young people having a range of opportunities to enjoy and achieve. They are currently exploring appropriate leisure activities and interests within the community that can meet the individual needs of the young people placed.

Children and young people are supported by dedicated staff to realise their full potential. Staff have high aspirations for young people and genuinely want them to achieve. Alternative provision is made for children and young people who are not yet enrolled at a school. In such instances daily home tuition is provided to ensure minimum disruption in learning while waiting for suitable school provision.

Not all children and young people had current statutory care plans on file. However, the impact of this is minimised by the home's own detailed and effective placement plans. Staff have excellent knowledge and understanding of the children and young people's needs and vulnerabilities. Staff ensure children and young people's full range of needs are promoted, including their individual identity. For example, staff have forged good links with specialised services, such as lesbian, gay and transgender support groups as well as autistic spectrum disorder services. Consequently, staff have in-depth knowledge, understanding and expertise in specific areas of need which enables them to effectively care for children and young people.

Staff are highly motivated and enthusiastic, they work hard to support young people reflect upon their behaviour. Staff are good at engaging children and young people in discussions about their feelings. Consequently, children and young people are provided with better coping strategies which help them to make more positive choices and sustain good relationships.

The home is maintained to a high standard and provides a warm, stable homely environment. The home has a secure well maintained back garden that provides extra space for the children and young people to socialise.

Keeping children and young people safe **good**

Children and young people say they feel safe and secure in the home. Their welfare is promoted and protected by dedicated, caring and knowledgeable staff.

Children and young people benefit from comprehensive and regularly reviewed risk and behaviour management plans. This ensures staff have updated knowledge and are therefore equipped with appropriate strategies to prevent risk and minimise harm.

The home is good at keeping children and young people safe. Risk taking behaviours such as missing from care, child sexual exploitations and gang involvement has significantly reduced. This is largely down to staffs concerted and persistent efforts to work with children and young people and influence change. Children and young people say 'the home really helped me as they never gave up.' Furthermore, they are linked in with services to support their emotional well-being, such as adolescent mental health and counselling services. Children and young people are given sufficient opportunities to address their emotions and learn how to respond to challenges more effectively.

When children and young people go missing, staff respond quickly, making determined efforts to locate them. Staff do their utmost to maintain contact with children and young people who are missing. The home has forged good links with other professionals to address missing from care concerns. For example, the police missing from care coordinator, social worker's and the manager of the home work collaboratively. This joint working has proved effective at reducing the incidents of missing and the associated risks of child sexual exploitation.

Children and young people are cared for by an experienced and appropriately vetted staff team. Staff are suitably qualified and receive ongoing training to develop their knowledge and skills in safeguarding. For example they attend many relevant courses including self-harm, physical intervention, fire prevention, first aid and bullying.

Restraint is rarely used incidents of restraint have reduced as children and young people's risk taking behaviour is decreasing. When restraint is used it is as a last resort and only to prevent significant harm to children, staff or others in the home. Positive behaviour management strategies and good relationships with staff are helping children and young people manage difficult emotions more constructively. This is reflected the homes restraint records which evidence a significant decline in the use of restraint.

The service provides a safe and stable home environment and a competent team of staff who prioritise children's safety and well-being. Safety is further enhanced by regular health and safety checks and frequent fire drills and equipment testing.

Leadership and management

good

The home is led by an enthusiastic, dedicated and effective manager. She is suitably qualified having gained the NVQ level 4 Leadership and Management award. She has over 9 years' experience in children's residential services, of which 4 years have been in management. She demonstrates a commitment to continued professional development for both herself and her team.

The manager is supported by the deputy manager and two senior residential support workers. They are all working towards acquiring appropriate management qualifications and have either completed or are soon to undertake training in professional supervision of staff. Additionally, the company has recently recruited a head of service for quality and safeguarding. The manager and staff work closely with her to ensure they are making improvements and constant developments. For example, the head of service for quality and safeguarding is developing systems for analysing staff training needs. This will ensure that all staff including managers are up-to-date with changes in legislation and current practice issues.

Young people benefit from living in a home run by an experienced and committed leaders and a highly supported team. There have been some changes in staff since the last inspection. This involved the use of agency staff for a short period until new staff were recruited or redeployed from other homes. This short period of staff instability did impact on children and young people as they were used to a constant staff team. The team is now stable and new staff are beginning to establish positive relationships with children and young people. The number of staff on duty is sufficient to meet the needs of young people. The present deployment of staff promotes continuity of care and provides opportunities for young people to form and sustain positive relationships with a consistent staff team.

Staff are enthusiastic about their development and willingly engage in ongoing training, supervision and annual appraisal. They share their knowledge with each other at regular team meetings. Staff are good at identifying each other's strengths and utilising their different skills and approaches to achieve better outcomes for children and young people.

Recording systems and children and young people's files are in excellent order; reflecting individuality and current and past life experiences and plans. All records are securely stored to ensure children and young people's right to confidentiality is respected and upheld. On occasion children and young people's statutory plans are not on file. As mentioned earlier, this had no impact as the home's own plans are well informed and actions clearly defined.

The manager ensures staff are involved in the monitoring and development of the service. Their views are sought during monthly service monitoring visits, team meetings and individual supervision sessions. Consequently, the team feel valued, respected and supported, which is reflected in the high standard of care provided.

The manager has demonstrated her ability and commitment to continued

improvement and development. This is reflected in her development plan which identifies areas for improvement including how she intends to monitor service improvement and clear plans for staff development and training. An updated statement of purpose and young people's guide clearly defines the service aims and objectives. Furthermore, the majority of good practice recommendations from previous inspection have been effectively met.

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.