

SC062248

Registered provider: Quality Protects Children Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is one of several owned and managed by a private company. The home cares for up to four young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or a learning disability.

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 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 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Staff are committed to safeguarding young people. They take effective action to keep young people safe and well. Young people say that they feel safe here.
- Due to the work undertaken by staff with young people, some young people now make better decisions to keep themselves safe, for example telling staff about

issues regarding sexting.

- Young people are making steady and sustained progress concerning their emotional health and well-being. They say that they are confident to talk to staff about anything and know that the staff will listen to them.
- Young people trust staff and feel at home. Importantly, young people are developing strong attachments and positive relationships with the people looking after them. Staff's natural warmth and humour enable them to engage young people and help young people to have a strong sense of belonging.
- Staff support the young people's relationships with their families and other people who are important to them effectively and sensitively. This includes ensuring that young people have regular opportunities to visit their families.
- The registered manager has a clear and accurate understanding of young people's progress and the key priorities for each young person.
- The registered manager ensures that the committed and stable staff team cares for the young people well. He is well aware of the strengths of the home and the areas for development. He said that the outcomes at the inspection 'are not a surprise' to him and that he will continue to work on these shortfalls.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Records do not yet clearly tell the story of each young person's stay at the home.
- The review of the quality of care provided needs to show the impact that it is having on young people's experiences and outcomes.
- The physical intervention record needs to contain all of the required information.
- Enhance further the recruitment process concerning the recording of verification conversations with referees.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
04/10/2016	Full	Good
07/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21/07/2015	Full	Good

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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 person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36(1)(a)(b)(c))	29/01/2018
The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, that a record is made which includes — a description of any injury to a child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered as a result of the measure, and that the manager has spoken to the member of staff about the measure. (Regulation 35(2)(a)(viii)(b)(i))	29/01/2018

Recommendations

- Ensure that the staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual young people in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about young people must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to them now or in the future. Ensure that the home's records on each young person represent a significant contribution to their life history. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4 and 14.5)

In particular, ensure that the home's records do not use inappropriate terminology such as absconding.

- Ensure that the registered person actively seeks independent scrutiny of the home and makes best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under Regulation 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

In particular, ensure that reports are evaluative, identify the strengths of the home, weaknesses, patterns and trends and the action to be taken to address them.

- Ensure that the recruitment practice safeguards children and young people and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

In particular, ensure that a record is made of the registered person or manager's conversations with referees when verifying a potential new member of staff's reference.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people enjoy trusting and meaningful relationships with the staff. Staff know the young people well and work out the best ways to engage with them. Staff are patient and understand how difficult it may be for young people to learn to trust adults. They realise that some young people may need time and space to get to know new people and to feel comfortable around them. Staff's friendly approach gives young people strong messages that staff care about them. A young person said, 'It takes me a while to trust people due to my past, but staff were understanding of this and worked with me through my journey.'

Young people know that staff are interested in their lives and want what is best for them. Young people also become aware that this is a safe place for them to live. One young person who has just left wrote, 'I want to say thank you so much, you always go out of your way to help when you can.'

Young people new to the home receive good support. This is because young people only come to live at the home after the registered manager is satisfied that the staff have the skills and expertise to meet each young person's individual needs. The impact on other young people living at the home is also carefully considered. Staff take the time to talk to young people and to help them to find their bearings from day one. A parent commended staff for the support provided to their child and to themselves. They said, 'I feel reassured that she is safe here.'

Young people receive individualised care and support. Staff have a very good understanding of each young person's needs and meet these well in practice. Some records in the young people's files do not contain the most up-to-date written information. This is because, when their key worker updates the information on the computer, a note is not always made in the young person's file. This is a recording issue and is minimised because staff share verbal information on a daily basis at the handover meeting.

Staff are very good at supporting young people who are moving on from the home. The registered manager and staff successfully challenged a local authority about where a young person was to live. As a result, the local authority found a more suitable location with additional support for the young person. Consequently, she has settled in well to her new home.

The registered manager and staff empower young people to express themselves as

individuals, taking into account their age, gender, culture and language needs. The registered manager and staff take into account fully the individual needs of young people living a long way from their family home. They help young people to maintain important links with their family and to see them regularly. The registered manager also ensures that young people have access to local education and health services, which meet their individual needs.

Young people are becoming more emotionally resilient. They are able to reflect on past experiences and to learn from them. A young person wrote a powerful poem about her feelings. She wrote, 'When you look in the mirror, what do you see? I see pain buried beneath a face of beauty.' The young person goes on to describe how she is rising above what others say. This is testimony to how, with the support of the staff team, the young person has built her emotional resilience and self-esteem. Young people are talking to professionals about smoking cessation and their sexual health. As a result, they are making informed choices about their health and have a much better understanding of the effect that negative choices can have on their future.

Young people have suitable freedom and choice in relation to the day-to-day arrangements for their care. They make decisions about their clothes, the food that they eat, how they spend their spare time, and the quality of their care. Young people said that one member of staff is a 'fabulous cook'. They spoke enthusiastically about the home-cooked meals that the staff member makes, especially the home-made waffles and pastries. Young people said that these smell 'gorgeous' of a morning when they come down to breakfast. As a result, young people are enjoying eating healthier meal options and are trying a range of new foods.

Staff have high, but reasonable, aspirations for young people's education. One young person said, 'They [staff] found me a better, new school and helped me back in to mainstream school.' Tutors said that some young people are 'coming on in leaps and bounds'. This is because the educational programme is tailored to their individual needs. Staff use innovative ways to help young people to engage in the lessons. For example, young people went with a member of staff to take items to the homeless in Liverpool city centre. This was because of a discussion about a homeless man who is creating a grotto where he lives. Staff and tutors supported the young people effectively in their endeavours. As a result, young people have a greater insight into the lives of others and the reasons why they find themselves in their current situation.

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

Young people feel safe and protected from harm. Young people are confident to talk to staff about their worries and concerns. A young person said, 'If I was lost, I would ring you guys [staff] or the police, and if I was followed I would run from them.' One young person felt safe to tell staff about how they were being encouraged to send inappropriate pictures via text message. Staff took swift and immediate action to support the young person and to ensure that she was safe. Social workers said that the staff worked 'really hard to keep everyone safe'.

Staff are skilled at recognising the signs and symptoms of abuse and if young people are groomed for exploitation. They identify and manage risk safely and meet all the

statutory safeguarding requirements, including reducing the risk of sexual exploitation. The registered manager and staff work sensitively with other professionals concerning the risks of sexual exploitation. This is helping young people to recover from traumatic past experiences and to understand the difference between healthy and harmful relationships.

There has recently been a spike in episodes of missing from care. Staff quickly identified the issue and implemented safeguards to keep all of the young people safe. Staff are proactive in preventing young people from going missing. Staff confidently and successfully challenged bus and taxi drivers to prevent young people from leaving the area. They patiently 'wait young people out' when they are hiding in the local area so that the young people come back home with staff. Young people said that they know staff care about them and do not want them to go missing. Young people said that they do not feel that they need to go missing from the home now.

Staff work well with other professionals, such as specialist protection teams, the police missing from care co-ordinators and the looked after children's nurses, to ensure that young people remain safe and well. Police missing from care coordinators say that they have a good relationship with the home's staff. They also say that staff have a good understanding of safeguarding and that staff are not afraid to ask for advice in order to keep young people safe.

Staff promote acceptable behaviour based on positive relationships with young people. They give young people clear and unambiguous expectations for standards of behaviour. Staff constantly praise, reward and celebrate young people's achievements. Young people receive rewards for various things, such as not swearing. There have been two physical interventions since the last inspection. Both were prior to the new manager's appointment. However, information is missing from the record. This includes the written staff debrief and confirmation as to whether a young person received medical attention following one of the incidents. The registered manager had already identified this shortfall, but is unable to fill in the gaps in recording.

There have been significant improvements in the décor and homeliness of the home. Young people are actively involved in updating the soft furnishings and furniture. They are pleased with the new table in the kitchen, as they can sit together to have breakfast. One young person said, 'The staff have been trying their absolute best to make this home a better place, and ever since the new manager has come it feels more like home and not just a care home.' A social worker commented on the 'strong family environment'.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A new registered manager was appointed in June 2017. He provides consistently effective leadership with a strong focus on making a meaningful difference to young people's lives. He is suitably qualified and a very experienced manager. A deputy and senior care workers support him. New staff have come on board in recent months. This has eradicated the need to use agency staff. The registered manager has spent considerable time building a strong team. As a result, staff work well together.

The registered manager ensures that people working at the home go through a rigorous

selection procedure and their suitability is carefully checked. He makes sure that they have the right personal qualities, enthusiasm, experience, skills, and values to work with vulnerable young people. The registered manager makes every effort to prevent unsuitable people from working at the home. He obtains all the available information to make decisions about a person's suitability. This includes verifying by telephone information about a person's practice, experiences and abilities from previous employers and other referees. However, a record of the outcome of the calls to referees is not included in staff's recruitment files.

The quality of team meetings has improved. Staff participate in regular team meetings to reflect on young people's progress, share important information about young people's plans and to discuss the running of the home. These forums provide opportunities for staff to develop their skills and understanding of legislation, policies and procedures. The staff's contribution is an important feature in making sure that they understand their roles, support young people consistently and work as a cohesive and effective team.

The registered manager has worked hard to address the issues from the last inspection. He has made numerous changes, including revising the staff rota and ensuring that each young person has two key workers. This means that young people have more opportunities to talk to their key staff. The manager completed an audit for the home and, from this, completed a comprehensive organic development plan. Staff are complementary about the registered manager and they can see the differences the changes have made to the organisation of the home, the staff, and young people. Staff said that the commitment and enthusiasm of the manager has encouraged them to remain at the home.

The registered manager is aware that there remains some shortfalls in record-keeping and is working with staff to address this. This is because the young people's working files do not contain the most up-to-date placement plans, healthcare plans and risk assessments. In addition, the use of some terminology, such as absconding, is not appropriate to describe young people who are missing from care. This does not provide clarity in records, especially for young people when they access their records now or in the future. The impact is reduced, as staff are able to relay what support is provided on a daily basis to each young person.

Visits by an independent person provide detailed and impartial scrutiny of the running of the home. The independent person's reports show young people's progress and experiences and include the views of young people about living at the home. The registered manager's review of the quality of care is informative. However, it does not identify shortfalls in record-keeping, or provide an analysis of any patterns of trends such as any decrease, or increase, in episodes of missing from care. This report does not demonstrate what staff did to improve the outcomes for young people.

The statement of purpose is current. It reflects the care and support provided to all young people. This is shared with placing authorities and carers so that they have realistic expectations of what the home can do. In addition, young people receive an informative children's guide when they arrive.

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, 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: SC062248

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Quality Protects Children Limited

Registered provider address: Quality Protects Children Ltd, Hill House, Archway Road, Huyton, Liverpool L36 9XB

Responsible individual: Anthony Nolan

Registered manager: Raymond Holt

Inspector

Chris Scully, social care inspector

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