

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC062288
Inspector	Andrew Hewston
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Educare Adolescent Services Limited
Registered person address	Venture House 12 Prospect Business Park, Longford Road CANNOCK Staffordshire WS11 0LG
Responsible individual	Mark Dyson
Registered manager	Beverley Anne Bristow
Date of last inspection	10/03/2014

Inspection date	07/08/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	adequate
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	adequate
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The home provides a supportive environment in which young people are generally happy. Young people say they enjoy positive relationships with staff and each other. Staff are able to recognise and evaluate individual care and welfare needs and these are recorded within internal assessment documents. Individualised planning is detailed and takes into consideration the needs and views of each young person.

Young people state that they feel safe and that the staff team look after them well. They are able to identify staff that they would turn to in times of concern and are positive about their future at the home and the opportunities that it may bring. The lack of food labelling may affect the safety of young people.

Young people's health needs benefit and improve by having access to focused health and psychological services that promote well-being. Education plans are often uncertain upon young people's admission however concerted multi-agency working effectively re-enables children's reintegration into school or specialist provision.

A complaint has been made to Ofsted relating to the home and the management. This was investigated during the inspection and although some aspects of the complaint were supported, these are being responded to through robust arrangements from the regional manager.

Staff at the home are experienced and appropriately qualified. Some inconsistencies in behaviour management practice do not always support the well-being of the young people. The management are aware of the strengths of the staff team and a development is in place to support areas where improvement in the team is needed. Staff are well supported through supervisions, appraisals and team meetings to develop improvements for the young people.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is part of a large organisation operated by a private company. The home provides care for up to three young people of either gender who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or a learning disability.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
23/01/2014	Full	good
26/02/2013	Interim	good progress
11/09/2012	Full	good

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
23 (2001)	ensure all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their health or safety, specifically food labelling (Regulation 23 a)	26/09/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure written records kept by the home when a child goes missing detail

action taken by staff, the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given by the child for running away from the home, and any action taken in the light of those reasons (NMS 5.10)

- ensure there is an environment and culture, to promote models and support positive behaviour that all staff understand and implement (NMS 3.2)
- ensure there is a good quality learning and development programme which staff and volunteers are supported to undertake. It includes induction, post-qualifying and in-service training to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments, specifically relating to behaviour management records (NMS 18.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

The home provides a supportive environment in which young people are generally happy. Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff and each other, with one young person stating that they think that "it is good that we all seem to get on together". Staff are able to recognise and evaluate individual care and welfare needs and these are recorded within internal assessment documents. Individualised planning is detailed and takes into consideration the needs and views of each young person. Contact arrangements are important from the start of the placement and organised in line with both the young person's wishes and any necessary restrictions. This ensures young people continue to be safe.

Young people's health needs benefit and improve by having access to focused health and psychological services that promote well-being. Psychological support services are individualised to respond to both the needs of the young people and to support the staff team. This helps them to deliver a service that develops young people's self-esteem and well-being.

Education plans are often uncertain upon young people's admission, however strong and concerted multi-agency working effectively re-enables children's reintegration into school or specialist provision. This allows young people to access and develop through differing educational provisions due to previous challenges within a mainstream setting.

Young people say that they enjoy attending regular young people's meetings. They say their views are sought on menu choices, activity plans and the development of the home. Individualised key working sessions allow consultation to be directed towards the specific needs of young people and identify specific community based and sporting activities. This means young people progress by developing new skills and decide on new interests they would like to pursue. For example, one young person talked about how they had enjoyed learning about boxing and that they were due to go on a camping holiday that they were excited about.

Eligible young people have personalised independent skills programmes in place to prepare them for transition to adulthood. Programmes reflect the abilities of young people and assessment records monitor their progress. This means that young people benefit from a clear understanding of the practicalities of independent living.

Young people state that they feel safe and that the staff team look after them well. They are able to identify staff that they would turn to in times of concern and are positive about their future at the home and the opportunities that it may bring.

Quality of care **good**

Young people enjoy good relationships with the staff team and these are developed as their placement progresses. Young people are able to discuss significant staff that they get on well with and would talk to if they had a problem or concern. Effective key working sessions are completed to ensure that young people have a specified staff member who consistently seeks their views. Regular young people's meetings are also held to gain young people's views and share information about the home. Complaints information shows that young people are confident in being able to raise concerns relating to their care. These are responded to swiftly, with information being shared regarding the outcome of these concerns to support an awareness that their views are listened to.

Staff devise internal placement plans and risk assessments from the looked after children placing information and plans. Internal placement plans incorporate behaviour management and intervention strategies to promote socially acceptable behaviours. Plans are appropriately individualised and highlight the differing needs of the young people. Plans are regularly updated, being responsive to changes in risk assessments or areas highlighted within reviews.

Health planning ensures that young people attend a range of health professionals from the start of their placement. Specific health needs are responded to well, with the organisations psychologist offering additional support to both young people and the staff team. This ensures that young people's health needs are effectively monitored and promoted. Medication is appropriately stored and administered to support the safe caring of the young people.

Young people benefit from tailored school placements that take account of any special educational needs they have. Staff work closely with education providers to ensure that progress young people make in education is recorded and celebrated. Staff encourage young people to pursue a range of activities and interests. These are incorporated into individual activity plans, and for some young people, further support their school timetables and provide continued learning opportunities. Young people participate in activities that reflect their personal interests. Staff support young people to vary their activities to develop new skills. This means that young people are provided with opportunities to improve their self-confidence and social interactions.

The home offers a comfortable and homely atmosphere. Young people state that they like the house, especially their bedrooms which they are able to personalise. The home has a wide range of resources including a games room and large garden, incorporating a tennis court. Some areas of the homes look dated and require modernisation, although this redecoration forms part of the home's development plan and is in the process of being responded to.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people are safe and say they feel safe. Issues of bullying are rare and young people state that they normally get on with each other. They talk about bullying during weekly meetings and discuss the effects of bullying during one to one sessions with staff.

Policies and procedures promote safe work practices. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and receive regular training to support their knowledge. Allegations and suspicions of harm are addressed within suitable timescales. This means young people are effectively supported in these circumstances.

The home works in close partnership with local police to address incidents of young people missing from home. Young people have detailed risk assessments in place that include the potential risk for sexual exploitation and highlight antecedents to missing from home episodes. Risk assessment include actions to be taken by staff should young people go missing. Where incidents have occurred young people are spoken to on their return to examine if there are ways to decrease the missing behaviours. The Registered Manager is currently unable give a clear breakdown of missing incidents through the current electronic system, other than to go through individual young people's records. This is being responded to through a dedicated file system.

All young people have management plans that are regularly updated to ensure that staff are aware of the most current responses to behaviours. Positive behaviours are promoted and rewarded through an individualised behaviour programme. This targets specific areas that young people are working on to further promote positive behaviours. Where restraints or consequences are used they are fully recorded within the home's computerised system. Similar to the missing persons records, there is not currently a clear way to examine the homes records although training in the use of the system and retrieving this information is planned for. There are differing responses to challenging behaviours within the staff team. This lack of a consistent approach to behaviours does not fully support the well being of young people as boundaries are occasionally unclear.

No new staff have been recruited at the home since the last inspection. Recruitment processes examined at the last inspection were seen to be robust and supporting the well being of young people.

Regular health and safety checks are completed in the home, including fire safety alarms and drills. Risk assessments relating to the home and activities within it are updated regularly and known by staff. Some foods are not labelled when opened and may cause a health risk to young people.

Leadership and management

good

The home has a Registered Manager who has been in post since February and is well qualified. She is currently studying for the QCF level 5 qualification. There has been a change in the management structure of the home since the last inspection and also changes in the responsibilities and expectations of the staff team. The majority of the staff team are very responsive to this challenge and the manager is well aware of the support that some staff have needed to develop the team. The Regional Manager for the home is also supporting the manager in developing key skills throughout the whole staff team. The Registered Manager is therefore very aware of the strengths of the staff team and is working hard to develop areas that require improvement. A detailed development plan is in place for the home.

The Statement of Purpose details the aims and objectives of the home. Young people understand the purpose of the home and the outcomes it aspires to achieve. Young people are provided with a copy of the children's guide to the home on admission. The guide is detailed and 'child friendly' and provides young people with clear overview of boundaries, expectations and the support staff provide.

Quality assurance systems which include consultation with external stakeholders, such as placing authorities, regular input from young people, staff and relevant others informs the managers day to day practice and adds to the homes development plan. All placing authority social workers contacted comment very positively about working as partners with the home to progress their children and young people's placement plans. Monthly monitoring is detailed both from the manager and the external visitors and the manager responds well to areas raised as requiring improvement. This highlights the management's commitment to improve. No requirements or recommendations were necessary from the last inspection.

The Registered Manager ensures that staff complete regular training courses around all key aspects of care including child sexual exploitation and missing from home events. Subsequently, young people's individual needs are met by a competent staff team. Furthermore, staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. This means their performance is continually monitored to ensure their practice meets the changing needs of young people.

The Registered Manager operates a system to record incidents and significant events and describes action taken, including the notification of these events to the appropriate authorities. Systems are robust and identify patterns and trends to young people's behaviours that are cross referenced to internal assessment documents. As a result, young people have the opportunity to review their behaviour and the progress they have made at the home.

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.