

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	29/09/2015
Unique reference number	SC062651
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Care Focus Limited
Registered person address	3rd Floor, 24 Chiswell Street, LONDON, EC1Y 4YX

Responsible individual	Jean Lloyd
Registered manager	Jane Burch
Inspector	Fiona Littlefield

Inspection date	29/09/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
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

SC062651

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Staff provide a sound and reliable service for young people with complex and challenging behaviours. Staff are committed to building relationships and providing highly personalised care. Routines are consistently applied with sensitivity and humour.
- Staff and managers concentrate on supporting young people to manage their behaviour positively. They encourage young people to reflect on the impact of their actions on others. Young people understand the system of rewards and sanctions, which staff apply resolutely and effectively.
- All young people have made progress in education given their starting points. Education and care services are integrated so daily routines in the house fully support school attendance, which is high. Staff and managers are ambitious for young people, wanting them to achieve academic results that will support their future career choices.
- Young people are encouraged to plan for the future and approach independence with optimism and confidence.
- Gaps in recording in case files mean that information about young people is not accurate and complete.
- Reports from an independent visitor have not been produced for each month and have not been up to date.
- Staff have not all received regular, individual supervision.

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 person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
13: The leadership and management standard: In order to meet the leadership and management standard with particular reference to monitoring the quality of care the registered person must: (2)(f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	06/11/2015
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(b))	06/11/2015
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month with specific regard to ensuring that the visits reflect on any activity in the home for that month. (Regulation 44 (1))	06/11/2015

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is one of a small group of homes run by an independent provider. It offers care for up to four children and young people. Education is available within the setting. Therapeutic services are available for the children and young people to directly access.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/03/2015	CH - Interim	Improved effectiveness
17/12/2014	CH - Full	Good
20/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people make progress because they benefit from warm and caring relationships with staff who remain resilient and steady under pressure and are interested in their news. Mealtimes are important. They can be both celebratory or an important indicator of how disruptive the day might have been. One member of staff said: 'We try to make it as much like a home as possible, eating meals together sitting at the table. Young people all attend.' Young people participate in choosing menus and are sometimes involved in meal preparation alongside staff. All young people are registered with local health services. Specialist counselling services are available and staff support them to attend. There are safe protocols for dispensing medication. However, many of the young people smoke. This has been reviewed by the local authority and young people's parents sometimes send gifts of tobacco or cigarettes. Staff and managers try to persuade the young people that smoking is not a healthy habit. Staff and care workers see education as the key factor in helping young people make progress, improving their ability to communicate and enhancing their self-esteem. All young people go to the in-house school with very high rates of attendance. Since the home's routines are organised around the school day, any newcomer is expected to follow the same routines as the rest of the group. Consequently, young people who have been persistent school refusers have learnt to engage in the same routines as their peers. This is outstanding progress for some given their starting points. Education and care staff work closely in the knowledge that some young people will need particular support to sustain their attendance and concentration. Care staff provide one to one support and, if necessary, young people can continue their work back in the home. The key is the expectation that no matter how difficult the behaviour may be, every young person has to complete the school day. Staff place a high priority on academic achievement in the knowledge that young people need to be prepared for their adult lives. Young people can acquire alternative qualifications but can also take exams in core GCSE subjects such as maths, English, science and art. The social worker for one young person said: 'To be honest, I thought that they were being too ambitious as they were really encouraging her to do GCSEs. She wants to work in the health service and will need basic qualifications. She has responded really well.' Consequently, young people's confidence and self-esteem improves.	

Staff and managers encourage young people to view their future with confidence and optimism. Staff treat all young people with respect and expect the same in return. For instance, the social worker for one young person said: 'He was known to have racist views but the staff group is racially diverse and he really likes them, so he has learnt respect.' Staff confront them with the impact of their behaviour but in a positive and engaging way. Young people gradually develop confidence in building relationships.

Other young people are planning their moves into independent lives. They learn to look after their personal and domestic routines, including cooking and managing their finances. Some are learning to drive while others have successfully applied for jobs. One young person said: 'I feel that I have grown up. I need to get on and get myself ready as I am nearly an adult.'

Staff are particularly empathetic in supporting young people to maintain relationships with their family, recognising that these are critical to their sense of identity and stability. Some young people are placed at some distance from the home but staff and managers positively support this contact.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people in this home say they feel safe and are cared for by staff who know their needs and vulnerabilities and follow clear plans to support them. For instance, when young people first come to the home, staff make every effort to help them settle in. If the placement has been planned, managers and staff will meet the young person in advance so they know what to expect and can make their feelings known. One young person said: 'It took ages to find somewhere for me but when I met them, I liked them.' In some cases, young people are placed as the result of an emergency placement. Staff go out of their way to make them feel comfortable and welcomed. One member of staff said: 'When they come, we don't overload them at the beginning, we explain routines bit by bit.' This approach helps moderate the stress someone new may be feeling. Staff and managers have adapted house routines so that they prioritise the needs of the young people for regular and stable care. For instance, each young person has a team of three key workers who work with them consistently. Staff rotas are arranged so that the same workers who settle them for the night are there to wake them up the next day and get them ready for school. Young people learn to feel secure and respond well.	

Key workers review young people's risk assessments every month and regularly share information with the allocated social worker and the staff group. As a result, in a crisis, staff know exactly what to do and respond in a consistent and measured way. However, there are some gaps in recording and managers do not consistently sign off records.

Staff are aware of the need to advocate assertively for young people, particularly those who are some distance from home. Consequently, young people feel valued and secure. One young person said: 'I want to be nearer home. I know that things don't always work out but I want people to listen and staff here do.'

Young people have complex needs and behaviours and on occasion they can demonstrate extremely challenging behaviour. Staff demonstrate an exceptional ability to work under pressure and a commitment to supporting unsettled and agitated young people. There is an emphasis on a positive approach; daily routines are consistently applied and all young people go to school. Consequently, newcomers know what to expect. This encourages them to relax and feel part of the household.

Staff place a particular emphasis on a positive attitude, politeness and good manners. Young people can earn rewards and choose evening activities. Equally, staff deal robustly and resolutely with any poor behaviour. They are well aware that disruptive behaviour can reflect inner turmoil. They use key worker sessions and weekly meetings with young people to reflect on this and the impact that it has on the household. One member of staff said: 'Staff are constantly challenging but we know the circumstances of the young people so we need to be balanced. We have to take notice of the whole group. We want to be open.'

Staff members work together very effectively. They have confidence in one another and work as a team. One member of staff said: 'We know each other's strengths and use positivity and humour.' Staff handovers are detailed and thorough and aim to prepare staff thoroughly so there is consistency of approach. Staff and managers have all reflected extensively on any incidents where young people have gone missing, to identify any specific triggers and learn lessons about future practice. This means that young people are safeguarded in the home.

Staff and managers in the organisation acknowledge their responsibility in maintaining safe care for young people who can be unpredictable and volatile. The registered manager has introduced a new programme of staff meetings to provide a more frequent opportunity to look at issues and build up an accurate picture of individuals. A senior manager said: 'We need to share feelings and instincts so that communication is clear and directive.' As a result, incidents of young people going missing has reduced considerably.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The manager is suitably qualified and has considerable experience in residential care work. She started her current post in August 2015, taking over from the previous manager who has been promoted within the company. In order to support the transition, her predecessor has worked alongside her for an induction period. She now feels confident about embarking on the task and developing her own staff team. Along with the manager, the previous deputy manager and a team leader have earned a promotion and left the home. Inevitably, these changes have had an impact on the staff team, who need time and opportunity to settle and develop other relationships. The new manager has approached this positively, arranging group supervision sessions and introducing a new programme of more frequent staff meetings. Consequently, change is seen as positive and young people benefit from being cared for by staff who feel respected and valued themselves. Senior managers are actively involved in reviewing individual progress of young people. They scrutinise information to identify trends and triggers in behaviour and address staff needs for training and support. Managers develop positive plans such as integrating education and social care so that young people benefit from a cohesive approach to their care. The development plan for the forthcoming year identifies a number of priorities, including improving the appearance of the home, sustaining achievements in education and improving staff training and development. While there is some progress in providing regular supervision, it is not addressed fully. Staff speak highly of their managers and leaders and feel supported but there is a need to provide regular, predictable recorded sessions. The manager relies on information from a variety of sources to evaluate the progress of young people. This can include monthly reports on individual young people, plus management reports from staff and meetings with personal tutors. Young people feedback directly to staff through their key worker sessions and their weekly group meetings. This cross-referencing of information is constant and dynamic and gives a lively picture of how the home is running. In addition, the manager has access to information about restraints, sanctions and rewards but she has not signed off all incidents. As a result, she is not able to review thoroughly how effective staff are in helping young people progress. External monitoring has not been adequate and does not give an up to date picture of activity in the home. Senior managers are aware that this is critical in helping both staff and managers reflect on progress and identify issues and challenges as they arise. They have addressed this robustly with the view that	

timely reports will now be provided.

Staff and managers are clear that the priority is to ensure that young people are benefiting from being in the home. Consequently, there is a high value placed on partnership and working alongside social workers to share information and develop robust relationships, which can help the young person. One social worker said: 'They are in constant contact and partnership is excellent.' In the event of a cancelled statutory review, the manager challenged this vigorously. Young people know that staff are working for them and this improves their self-esteem.

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 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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