

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	16/01/2017
Unique reference number	SC063219
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Children Assisted in a Real Environment Ltd
Registered provider address	144 Old Oak Road, London W3 7HF

Responsible individual	Linda Blakely
Registered manager	Natasha Robinson
Inspector	Christine Kennet

Inspection date	16/01/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has improved effectiveness. The home has improved effectiveness because it has continued to provide good-quality care in a nurturing and homely environment. The staff team is stable, and some staff have worked at the home for over ten years. This stability, combined with a warm and caring approach, has allowed young people to develop positive self-esteem and build confidence in their own abilities. Two young people, both of whom have lived in the home for over two years, have turned 18 and moved into independent living placements. Neither placing authority provided consistent or effective planning for these transitions. Staff at the home challenged this approach and involved advocates to support the young people, with some degree of success. Nevertheless, the transitions should have been better organised. This would have prevented last-minute moves and given more opportunity for choice. When challenge from the home is ignored, managers, as champions for young people, must escalate matters to a higher level until they receive effective responses. The support that the young people received from staff at the home during and after their moves goes over and above expectations. Managers and staff continue to offer both emotional and practical support, including occasional meals, in the same way as an extended family. Two young people have moved into the home since the last inspection. The managers gave careful consideration to new referrals, using a pre-admission risk assessment. This allowed them to consider the impact that the new admissions would have on existing young people living at the home. The two new residents have settled into the home well. The staff team has good knowledge and understanding of the new young people's needs and is working hard to support and settle them into the home. A strength of this home is its focus on expecting young people to attend education or activity to give them structure and purpose and to build skills for the future. Record-keeping meets regulation. However, key information, although recorded on file, is not consistently recorded in one place. For example, although there are basic information sheets at the front of files, these are not always fully completed. The information is in the file, but is not readily available. To assist staff and to	

ensure that information is available quickly in an emergency, basic information sheets should be completed.

All young people in the home are on roll in education. Staff work consistently and tirelessly to ensure that young people attend, and use incentives to support this goal. Staff constantly model good behaviour and give young people strategies to manage difficult feelings. The experience of the staff team, combined with the warm and caring approach, builds trust and confidence and ensures that consistent boundaries are set and maintained. One social worker said, 'The placement is very supportive. They work and communicate well. They 'think outside the box' and are helpful.'

Restraint is rarely used; there has not been a need to restrain any young person in the last twelve months. Staff have a good working relationship with the community police, who have supported on rare occasions to enforce boundaries without criminalising young people. Regular key-working sessions address issues with young people in a non-conflictual way and de-brief interviews help young people and staff to understand how and why there was escalation.

Staff help young people to integrate into the community, by sourcing and supporting activities, such as leisure centre and gym membership or attendance at army cadets. When appropriate, staff support positive contact for young people with their immediate and extended family. This helps young people to feel that their family remains an important part of their lives and can visit their home.

Leaders and managers have grown in strength in this organisation. An independent person visits the home once every month and provides a report on how the home can improve. The leaders and managers take on board recommendations made in these reports and have worked hard to continue effective improvement.

The home environment has benefited from recent improvements. The downstairs hall flooring has been replaced, giving a much brighter, cleaner look to the home. In the upstairs bathroom, the lavatory seat is broken and needs replacing and the bath panel requires some repair. Apart from these minor issues, the home is comfortable and homely.

The registered manager meets with other providers and the Local Safeguarding Children Board in the host borough. This has provided opportunities for sharing good practice and attending local training.

The manager has taken effective action to implement the recommendations made at the full inspection. Two of the three recommendations have been completed. The third recommendation is in respect of training and a date is fixed for this to take place.

Information about this children's home

Registered in 2005, this home is registered to provide residential care and support for up to five young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties and who present with challenging behaviour. The emphasis is on providing a family environment and a warm, professional and caring approach. The home is one of two registered homes in the area owned and operated by a private organisation. One registered manager is in charge of both homes.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/05/2016	Full	Good
10/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
01/06/2015	Full	Good
18/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that where the placing authority does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, the home challenges the authority to meet the child's needs. Staff should act as champions for their children, expecting nothing less than a good parent would. When there is no action or response to challenge by the home, the home should escalate this to a higher level and request a review of care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)
- Ensure that physical necessities are maintained. This is in relation to the broken lavatory seat and bath panel in the upstairs bathroom. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.3)
- Ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. This is in relation to ensuring that basic information is recorded in one place on children's files. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.6)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection, we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 that 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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