

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC063219
Inspector	Jackie Graves
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Children Assisted in a Real Environment Ltd
Registered person address	Flat 91, Western Beach Apartments 36 Hanover Avenue LONDON E16 1DZ
Responsible individual	Linda Blakely
Registered manager	Natasha Robinson
Date of last inspection	27/02/2014

Inspection date	23/06/2014
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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	adequate
Quality of care	adequate
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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There is a friendly, respectful atmosphere in the home. Young people have formed friendships; they share some activities together, for example, attending the leisure centre or going to the cinema. Young people say they 'like all the staff' and get on well with them.

An independent reviewing officer said the home is good at 'developing positive relationships with parents'. Another said the staff are 'good' at meeting young people's cultural needs and 'experienced in dealing with mixed cultures in the area and this is reflected in the team'.

Staff are enthusiastic about giving young people a positive experience during their stay in the home. Meeting young people's diverse needs is a strength of the staff team. Young people from other countries are supported to learn English, establish links with others of a similar cultural, ethnic or religious background in the local community, and feel settled.

Shortfalls are found in; staff recruitment, the long hours staff are occasionally scheduled to work, consultation as part of the manager's monitoring of the home, the information provided about the service and the decoration, cleanliness and homeliness of some parts of the premises. Recommendations to improve the service

are made about educational resources, further obtaining young people's views, including more in children's records and compiling information and keepsakes to help young people reflect on and understand their lives.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home was registered in 2005 to provide residential care and support for up to five young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and operated by a private organisation that has recently registered another home in the area. One Registered Manager is in charge of both homes.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/02/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
07/10/2013	Full	adequate
25/03/2013	Interim	good progress
15/11/2012	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
4 (2001)	include in the Statement of Purpose all of the matters listed in Schedule 1 (Regulation 4 (1))	31/08/2014
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the children's guide (Regulation 5 (a))	31/08/2014
25 (2001)	ensure a sufficient number of staff so that staff do not work unacceptably long shifts (Regulation 25 (1))	31/07/2014
26 (2001)	evidence that a person is physically and mentally fit for the purposes of the work they are to perform and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to him in respect of each of the matters	31/07/2014

	specified in Schedule 2, specifically two written references which include a reference from the person's most recent employer, if any (Regulation 26 (3) (c) (d))	
31 (2001)	make sure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31 (2) (e))	30/09/2014
34 (2001)	ensure the manager's monitoring system shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	31/08/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure children have access to a range of educational resources to support their learning and have opportunities beyond the school day to engage in activities which promote learning (NMS 8.2)
- ensure that, where practicable, children are involved in the recruitment of staff to the home (NMS 16.8)
- make sure that staff appraisals take into account the views of children the service is providing for (NMS 19.7)
- make sure that information about the child is recorded in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future, specifically that key work and one-to-one sessions are recorded (NMS 22.5)
- support and encourage children to reflect on and understand their history, to keep appropriate memorabilia of their time in the placement and make a record of significant life events. (NMS 22.6)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Some young people who have been involved in risky behaviour prior to moving into the home, including going missing, have been successful in changing their behaviour. They are no longer placing themselves at risk and are considering what kind of future is possible to them if they are no longer involved in criminal behaviour. Some who have shown aggression in previous placements have not shown any such behaviour after moving into the home. An independent reviewing officer states that for one young person 'this is the most stable placement so far'.

Young people enjoy general good health. They have an increasing knowledge of the importance of healthy lifestyles and most do not engage in any behaviour which may put their health at risk, for example, drug or alcohol abuse. They take responsibility for exercising regularly to optimise their good health.

Young people gain practical and life skills to help them be as independent as possible, as well as preparing for their adult lives. A young person says they are 'learning to do a lot more for themselves'. Some young people do struggle with this, as culturally they may expect adults to do everything for them. However, staff help them to understand that they want them to be independent and not reliant on others. As a result, young people actually enjoy learning new skills, such as cooking, managing laundry and cleaning their own rooms.

Educational achievement is variable. Most young people want to do well and are motivated to make progress in catching-up to their peers. Not all are currently in education or training but have places secured for the September term. A few are on short courses in subjects that interest them and where they can meet other young people until they attend school or college full time. Some attend their establishments punctually so they can make the most of their learning opportunities. However, for a minority, who have problems with punctuality and behaviour in school, attendance and progress is erratic; in some subjects, progress has declined, which may limit their future options.

Young people benefit from seeing family and friends who are important to them. Visitors are made welcome in the home. Those young people seeking asylum are supported to consider possibly searching for or re-establishing contact with their families in their home countries, for example, through the Red Cross, when they are ready to do so.

Quality of care **adequate**

A social worker states the home is 'good at meeting cultural needs'. The staff make sure young people can follow their religion and have the items they need for worship. Cultural and religious dietary needs are met. A young person says their 'privacy is respected as well as religion accommodated'.

Staff challenge stereotypical views, for example, about the role of women in society so that young people are assisted to have an understanding of what it means to live in Britain and are helped to settle. Links established with groups in the local community, who share a common language and culture with young people, particularly helps those from abroad to feel more at home in this country. As a result, young people are assisted to improve their knowledge of English and begin to put down roots. Where staff do not speak a young person's language, they make good use of technology for translation. As a result, young people's use of English as an additional language quickly develops, they can express their needs and feel less isolated.

The home advocates strongly for young people to receive an education placement, on occasion performing the role of placing authorities in securing provision. An independent reviewing officer says the staff 'put in a lot of work to support education'. Some educational activities have taken place for those young people not currently in education or training, such as provision of worksheets or visits to the Science Museum and these are very well received. However, these activities are on an ad hoc basis and young people would like more structure during the week when they can practise and develop their skills and learn new things, until an education/training placement is available.

The home is developing its education policy to try to ensure further access to educational resources. There are some educational resources in the home and young people do make good use of a local library. However, further access to reading materials, such as magazines and newspapers, in the home may encourage daily reading habits and support those schools who recommend this as a daily activity to help some young people make better progress.

Young people trust the staff and feel they have their best interests at heart. They feel they can talk to the staff about any worries and they will be listened to. Indeed, the home's complaints process shows that concerns are taken seriously and thoroughly investigated. There is a relaxed atmosphere in the home where young people and staff chat and enjoy spending time together. There is also time for one-to-one discussions and key work. However, the effective individual discussions staff have with young people are not always evidenced in written records so young people do not have access to full records of their time in the home. Photographs of young people participating in events are usually displayed in the home. However, keeping appropriate memorabilia of their time in the placement and making a record of significant life events is not always done to help young people when they move on from the home and reflect on their lives.

Arrangements for young people's health are sound. Staff make sure that young people get the health treatment and checks they need, for example, using walk-in clinics when there is unavoidable delay in registering them with General Practitioners. Sometimes, young people do not accept the appointments made for them, but staff persist in re-booking and encouraging them to attend, mostly with success. Also, some young people are not yet in a position to accept those services which may help them come to terms with their pasts. Arrangements for storing and administering medication are safe and effective.

Young people are engaged in activities which support their good health, for example, attending the gym, swimming and playing football. There are regular trips out as a group, for example, to the cinema, but young people are also encouraged to pursue their own interests. Some young people would like to try a wider range of activities; as they have already discussed this with staff, who are exploring possibilities, a recommendation is not made in this report. Young people enjoy occasional trips which help them discover London or just for enjoyment during the summer holidays. The manager is exploring the possibility of giving young people the experience of a holiday.

Young people like their bedrooms and the general appearance of the rest of the home. Some young people keep their curtains drawn, so their rooms are somewhat dark during the day, as people in the street may see into their rooms. However, the manager agreed to purchase net curtains as a solution. Most bedrooms and the lounge are to a higher standard of decoration and furnishing than the rest of the home. In a few places, the appearance is not homely, for example, some of the notices on noticeboards appear institutional, the garden is a bare yard and there is insufficient seating in the kitchen. The bathrooms are not sufficiently clean. Although action was taken to rectify some of these points during the inspection, for example, bathrooms were deep-cleaned and garden furniture purchased, a requirement is made in this report to ensure young people experience a high standard of accommodation throughout.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

In some aspects safety is very strong, but is judged adequate due to some shortfalls in the staff recruitment process.

Young people feel safe in the home. The manager is exploring the safety of the local area in order to optimise their knowledge of any dangers and minimise risk, in line with amended regulations.

The home is successful in helping young people make changes to behaviour which may place them at risk. They demonstrate good, practical knowledge of matters which may compromise young people's safety, for example, gang involvement,

extremism or human trafficking. They are also fully aware of individual vulnerabilities arising from young people's diverse needs. A social worker says the home are doing 'an A-plus job' in helping young people turn around really risky behaviour.

Behaviour is managed well. Significantly, no incidents of restraint have occurred since the last inspection and only three sanctions, which is testament to the positive relationships staff have established with the young people. Young people find the home's approach to behaviour management 'fair' and really like the financial rewards they may 'earn' each week as a result of meeting agreed targets.

Staff manage well any episodes of young people going missing. They make sure that young people understand why they will be reported missing and how this may place them at risk. There have been twelve incidents of young people going missing since the last inspection, but in the majority of cases it has been a matter of young people returning slightly late to the home. Staff explore the reasons for this and work successfully to ensure there is improvement in timekeeping, for example, through discussion with relatives. Young people show maturity and respect in trying to make sure they tell staff when they are running late.

The building's safety is maintained, for example, with checks of the gas installation and health and safety risk assessments, to ensure the environment is as safe as possible for young people.

The staff recruitment system is not entirely robust. Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service are conducted on all those seeking to work in the home. Although curriculum vitae are obtained, the home's job application forms are not completed; as a result, candidates do not have the opportunity to write about why they want to work in the home and what they bring to the role. Neither do they make a declaration of their physical and mental fitness. In one case, written references are not obtained from the last employer and there is only one relevant reference. Although these shortfalls have not had any direct consequence on young people, the system is not sufficiently strong at the moment to ensure that people are thoroughly checked to meet regulations and to ensure they are safe to work with young people.

Leadership and management

adequate

The home benefits from being run by a manager who has registered for a year and three months, has extensive experience and is a qualified social worker. The Registered Manager is working towards achieving the appropriate management qualification to further develop her skills. A staff member describes management as 'very supportive' and always ready to listen to them.

The manager reviews the quality of care and supplies Ofsted with reports of their findings as required by regulation. However, the reports do not evidence that people living in the home and those associated with the service are consulted. The service is

also checked by a visitor each month. The manager is exploring the visitor's independence from the service to ensure this meets the amended regulation.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a stable, diverse staff team, some of whom have worked in the home for a number of years. They provide strong role models to the young people, particularly in terms of gender and ethnicity. Agency staff are not used, so young people experience consistency in those who care for them. On occasion, staff have worked very long shifts, including waking nights, to ensure that there are enough staff to care for the young people. Although staff say this does not affect their performance, this could potentially impact on their work, health and safety and is not ideal. However, staff recruitment is ongoing.

Staff are well supported to work effectively with young people. Staff receive training relevant to their role to help them meet the needs of the young people they care for; all staff are trained in first aid so are able to provide emergency treatment should young people need this. New staff find the induction they are given really helps them settle quickly into the role. Impressively, all staff have achieved the level three qualification. They are supported through team meetings and individual supervision and feel they work as a 'strong team' with young people as the focus. One said there is 'no discrimination at all - we work as a team'.

The home's Statement of Purpose gives readers information about what the home provides so that they know what to expect from the service, but does not contain some of the required information. The children's guide provides young people with useful details, for example, about how they may obtain an advocate. In a few places, the meaning is not clear and some terms are not child-friendly. Also, the equal opportunities section does not reflect the good practise that is demonstrated in the home. The staff ensure this document is interpreted when a young person reads in a language other than English, so they know what to expect from the service.

Management has met all the requirements made at the last inspection, indicating a capacity to improve. One recommendation is met and another is partly met; although the home is better demonstrating how it listens to young people, their views are not yet sought in the recruitment and appraisal of staff. This would enable them to have a say about those who are employed to care for them. Therefore, new recommendations are made in relation to further listening to young people.

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.