

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	04/01/2016
Unique reference number	SC064931
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Pear Tree Projects Limited
Registered person address	Peartree House, Bolam, DARLINGTON, County Durham, DL2 2UP

Responsible individual	David Bartlett
Registered manager	Michael Crisp
Inspector	Ann-Marie Born

Inspection date	04/01/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained 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

SC064931

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people are thriving as a result of the consistent care provided by the nurturing and skilled staff team
- Young people make good progress in engaging in education and learning
- Young people's physical health improves as a result of the promotion of a healthy lifestyle
- Young people's psychological health and well-being are much improved due to the effective partnership working between the home and specialist health providers
- Young people are learning the importance of respect for themselves and others leading to improved behaviours
- The manager and staff are good role models providing structured care and firm boundaries

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
The independent person must produce a report about the visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether- (a) children are effectively safeguarded; and (b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (4)(a)(b))	31/03/2016
The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (5))	31/03/2016

Recommendations

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

- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, Page 53, Paragraph 10.11) In particular, 'managing anger and challenging behaviour'; 'attachment' and 'managing sexually harmful behaviours'.
- Staff should be 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 children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that is helpful to the child. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, Page 62, Paragraph 14.4.)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home accommodates up to eight young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities. It is provided by a private organisation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/08/2014	Full	Good
02/01/2014	Interim	Good progress
23/07/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Young people take great pride in their home. They explained that they have learnt from staff that this is their home and they should respect it and they do so. They enjoy spending time together in one of the large lounges or spending restful time alone in their comfortable, well-equipped bedrooms. At present, three of the bedrooms have en suite bathrooms but there are formal plans to provide all of the bedrooms with these facilities. The large dining table seats the young people and staff comfortably and they share an evening meal together every night 'like a family'. The sense of belonging and security this engenders empowers young people to engage with the care provided. A young person said, 'I love the space, the size of my bedroom and that I've been able to decorate it myself. This is the kind of place I've always wanted to live.' Young people make good progress in all aspects of their lives. Their individual needs are well planned for allowing them to grow and mature while learning positive social and life skills. Young people are actively involved in their care planning and encouraged to attend their reviews. This provides them with a sense of ownership and responsibility, empowering them to recognise and build on their positive achievements. An independent reviewing officer (IRO) said, 'We just had his review prior to Christmas and identified he is making excellent progress in terms of his behaviour and social skills. We are very pleased with the progress he is making.' One young person said, 'I am very happy here' and another said that 'it's a really enjoyable place to live' because of their positive relationships with staff members. Each young person can identify a worker they feel particularly close to and can talk to whenever they wish. This sense of belonging and 'home' provides young people with feelings of self-worth, empowering them to make sense of the circumstances that have led them to being accommodated. For the majority of young people, this growth in confidence and well-being has allowed them to rebuild, and in some cases rekindle, their relationships with important family members. The proactive staff team work hard to promote these relationships, in line with care plans, facilitating contact both within the home and the young person's family environment. Consequently, young people are able to maintain their cultural and community links providing them with support now and in their future adult lives. A parent said, 'They keep me informed. They've done great with him here.'	

This home is part of a larger company which has its own school. The school has been rated as outstanding by Ofsted. All of the young people attend this school where they have the opportunity to participate in academic and vocational courses. The small, individual education packages they provide allow young people who previously had not engaged with learning to benefit. One young person, who passed his GCSE Mathematics examination at Grade C last year, has now moved on to mainstream college. An IRO said, 'He has also benefited from the unique education he receives from the school. The one to one support he gets from that means academically he is achieving well, better than we thought he would.'

Young people's physical health improves as a result of their consistent contact with health professionals and the healthy lifestyle promoted in the home. They participate in a range of activities including walking, fishing, playing table tennis and horse riding. One young person has lost over three stone in weight since moving in to the home. This is substantially improving his self-esteem and allowing him to now fully participate in all activities. The looked after children's (LAC) nurse said, 'The walking and activities promote their health and well-being and gives them interests for the future.'

The close links the home has with mental health professionals enables young people to receive the structured, specialist support they need. This, coupled with their sense of security and belonging allows them to grow in psychological and emotional health and well-being, promoting positive outcomes. A social worker said, 'Feeling secure has helped him come off his medication and go back to school' and an IRO stated, 'The consistent care and positive reinforcement he has had from staff has had a significant impact on his mental health.'

Young people use a range of methods to express their wishes and feelings. These can be in formal settings such as the young people's meetings and their key work sessions or informally over their evening meal. They are encouraged to share their opinions in a positive manner empowering them to learn social skills.

The home's complaints information is readily available to young people. Complaints are dealt with in a speedy manner and young people's responses to the outcomes recorded. This provides them with the confidence to express dissatisfaction appropriately and to learn from the responses.

Young people are inspired to become involved in inclusive pastimes in the community as well as participating in the home's group activities. For example, one young person plays in a table tennis club and another is a member of a scout group. The breadth of activities and hobbies available to them broadens young people's horizons. They are able to take part in a way that they would not have been able to in their home location. This builds self-esteem and ambition in young people to do more. A young person said, 'My time is used really well here and I'm learning new things I would never have known I was good at. I would rather live

here than I would at home.'

Young people are encouraged to learn and develop self-care skills, for example, washing, ironing and keeping their rooms clean. As they mature, in line with their pathway plans, they take on more responsibility for their futures. For example, using public transport to go to college in a neighbouring town. A parent said, 'He's doing great here, he's come on so much.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Comprehensive new risk assessments identify young people's individual vulnerabilities. Appropriate interventions are then tailored to meet their needs providing safeguards yet allowing young people to engage in age appropriate activities. Consequently, young people grow in self-esteem. A young person said, 'I know where I stand and what is expected of me. There's always someone to talk to and I feel safe.' Young people report that there are no bullying issues. On occasion, there are tensions between the young people but they state that they feel safe as they know that staff will protect them. Careful management of such situations allows all young people to express themselves while protecting them. High staffing levels and young people's sense of security mean that there have not been any missing episodes from this group of young people. Robust locally agreed protocols ensure that staff know what to do if there were to be a missing episode. In addition, the manager's membership of a local forum provides current information about any risks in the neighbourhood, which provides further protection. A missing person's police officer said, 'With safeguarding, he (the manager) is at the forefront. He's aware of things and when I ring him he's already got things in place around safeguarding.' The committed and skilled staff team provide young people with consistent boundaries and expectations. Young people learn how to respect themselves and each other as a result of the good role modelling displayed by the staff team. This ethos is complemented by the individual behaviour management plans, which identify young people's stressors and the strategies employed to address them. Young people learn more appropriate ways of expressing any anger and frustration. A social worker said, 'The strict, consistent routines and boundaries have made that difference for him.'	

As a result of young people's improved behaviours and their good relationships with staff, for the majority of the time they respond appropriately within the home. However, there are occasions where physical intervention is necessary to prevent injury to other young people and staff. All staff are appropriately trained in restraint techniques and how to ensure young people receive appropriate care following an incident. This ensures young people are protected. A local authority designated officer (LADO) said, 'I certainly feel that the children are safeguarded there.'

Sanctions, such as the removal of the young person's television cable for an evening, are used effectively to address certain behaviours. Young people are able to learn from these experiences, and the positive consequences they receive, thus empowering them to develop social skills which benefit them now and in their future adult lives.

The recording of events both leading up to and following a restraint or the imposition of a sanction are much improved and now comply with legislation. This demonstrates that the home has met the requirement raised at the last inspection. However, some of the content of records is subjective and could be read as opinion. This is not helpful to the young person.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
The skilled and experienced registered manager has been managing this home since it opened in 2005. Prior to that, he managed another children's home for three years. He is appropriately qualified to fulfil his role. The young people, staff and professionals all report very positively about his leadership and the sense of belonging he engenders. This provides a sense of security for young people allowing them to engage within the home. A staff member said, 'I feel that the reason why the boys feel secure is because of the culture of respect for themselves, each other, the staff and the home. This comes from the top and I think that (manager's name) is the best manager I've ever had.' The manager uses his day-to-day knowledge of the young people and the home's important information files to demonstrate the progress young people make across all aspects of their lives. This knowledge, further informed by the manager's monitoring processes, enables him to facilitate additional support where necessary.	

This benefits the individual young person and all of the young people in the home. The manager said, 'To me it's about making sure the boys have the best future they can have and that they are safe while they are doing it.'

A resilient, nurturing and skilled staff team report positively on how well supported and trained they are to fulfil their roles. Robust recruitment processes are effectively applied ensuring that young people are not cared for by people who may pose a risk to them. All staff receive regular supervision and their annual appraisals formally celebrate their strengths and identify any areas for development.

The company provides a range of relevant training opportunities in addition to a comprehensive induction programme. All staff hold the requisite level three qualification. However, not all staff have completed specialist training on areas relevant to the young people in the home, for example managing anger and challenging behaviour, attachment and managing sexually harmful behaviours.

Internal monitoring procedures provide further safeguards for young people and identify areas for future development. Young people's opinions, and those of their parents, are carefully obtained and used to inform care. However, the views of staff and professionals are not routinely captured. This means they are not afforded the opportunity to influence or comment upon the care provided.

The independent visitors reports are detailed and evaluative. The action plans they provide are used positively to improve care and outcomes for young people. However, they do not specifically identify whether young people's well-being is promoted and if they are appropriately safeguarded.

The home's Statement of Purpose details the care to be provided and where this home fits within the company and in relation to the organisation's school. Young people are appropriately accommodated enhancing their opportunities for success. The children's guide is a bright and colourful document which can be personalised for each young person. It provides them with clear information about the home's routines and ethos as well as other useful information. For example, telephone numbers for a range of independent advocates and specialist services.

Young people benefit from the very good working relationships the home and manager have with partner agencies. This productive approach allows young people to receive consistent messages about their care and future plans. The manager proactively contacts placing authorities to ensure young people receive regular communication with their social worker and all of their necessary documentation. The LAC nurse said, 'I've always found it very well run, the communication is very good and they are very approachable' and the LADO stated, 'I feel they are doing very well, we have good relations.'

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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