

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	21/09/16
Unique reference number	SC064931
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Pear Tree Projects Limited
Registered provider address	Peartree House, Bolam, Darlington, County Durham DL2 2UP

Responsible individual	David Bartlett
Registered manager	Michael Crisp
Inspector	Susan Atkinson-Millmoor

Inspection date	21/09/16
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	Requires improvement

SC064931

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people are making good progress, supported by a knowledgeable and committed team.
- Young people benefit from the education provision provided by the organisation. This enables the home to offer a holistic approach to placements.
- Young people's physical health improves as a result of the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.
- Contact is promoted and supported, where appropriate.
- The home has strong boundaries that teach respect for self and others. Young people are well mannered and polite.
- The home provides a wide range of data to those professionals working with young people that enables positive planning to take place.
- Young people benefit from a wide range of activities and develop a strong sense of achievement.
- The home has positive, effective relationships with other professionals.
- Young people benefit from the range of options for time alone or in a group.

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 '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 registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year, taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). (2) When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46(1)(2))	28/10/16
12. In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular regard to ensuring the fire doors are safe and maintained, the registered individual must ensure— (d) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health.	28/10/16
13. In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular regard to ensuring that mandatory training is updated at required intervals, paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.	28/10/16
The registered person must ensure that all employees— (a) undertake appropriate continuing professional development; (b) receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(a)(b))	28/10/16
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which— (a) include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; (b) are kept up to date; and (c) are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36(1)(a)(b)(c))	28/10/16

In particular, ensure that recording is clear, non-judgemental and gives adequate explanation of how conclusions are reached.	
7. In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, children receive care from staff who— (d) ensure that an explanation is given to each child as soon as reasonably practicable after the child's arrival about— (ii) how to make a complaint or representations in relation to the home or the care the child receives and how any such complaint or representations will be dealt with.	28/10/16

Recommendations

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

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- In addition to the requirements of this standard, the registered person has specific responsibilities under regulation 34 to prepare and implement policies setting out: arrangements for the safeguarding of children from abuse or neglect; clear procedures for referring child protection concerns to the placing authority or local authority where the home is situated if appropriate; and specific procedures to prevent children going missing and take action if they do. The policy on protection of children from abuse and neglect should include arrangements in relation to dealing with allegations involving staff in the home, e-safety and to counter risks of self-harm and suicide. All policies should be reviewed regularly and revised, where appropriate.

In particular, the digital policy should be updated to reflect the current issues affecting young people. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.9)

- The home's policies and procedures around the protection of children should reflect any requirements of other relevant legislation.
In particular, this includes the guidance available in 'Working together' 2015 and associated guidance. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.22)
- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they

are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. The statement of purpose is an important document in the process of care planning as it sets out the needs of children the home is set up and equipped to care for. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

- Staff supervision must enable staff to reflect and act upon how their own feelings and behaviour may be affected by the behaviour of the children they care for. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.15)
- All staff must have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. This appraisal should take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and children in the home's care. As part of the performance management process, poor performance should be addressed by a timely plan to bring about improvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)

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
24/02/15	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/08/14	Full	Good
02/01/14	Interim	Good progress
23/07/13	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people benefit from living in a large, well-equipped home that offers a range of resources for both individual and group activities. Young people express great pride in the home and, in particular, their bedrooms. A young person said, 'I love my room, even though I change it around quite often!' At present, three of the bedrooms have en suite bathrooms. The plans to provide all of the bedrooms with these facilities, in place at the last inspection, have been halted due to issues with the plumbing system. The manager still hopes to move forward with the plans once the issues are resolved. The staff team recognises that pre-planning and an opportunity for everyone to come to know each other is essential before making plans based on previous reports. The manager and staff dedicate a large amount of time and discussion to this pre-admission phase. The result is that young people are able to settle well at their own pace, giving them a solid foundation for progress. Young people make good progress in all aspects of their lives. Each young person has a dedicated key worker to help them to reflect on their history and their future plans. Young people could identify an adult within the home who they felt close to and could share their concerns or worries with. An independent reviewing officer said, '(name) has made good progress while he has been here. Young people are well supervised and the staff keep (name) and others safe.' The staff team is aware of the previous circumstances of all young people and, where appropriate, staff encourage and support contact with family and friends. This allows relationships to be re-built, offering positive, resilient interactions that provide a solid foundation once the young person reaches adulthood. A parent, talking about the staff, said, 'They are very, very supportive.' The home is part of a larger company which has its own school. All of the school-age young people are enrolled and all achieve 100% attendance. The staff transport young people and remain in the classroom on a daily basis. This enables consistent, seamless support to be offered between home and the school. Young people are treated as individuals within this system and have the opportunity to participate in academic and/or vocational courses, depending upon their interests and abilities. Those young people who have moved on from the school have achieved college placements and manage their own transport. The high attendance that they have achieved at school has carried forward to these placements, demonstrating that they recognise the expectations around education and the benefits that it can bring.	

Young people are in good health. They participate in a range of activities, including walking, fishing, playing table tennis and horse riding. The majority of young people identify both the food and the range of activities on offer as the best things about the home. They are proud of their achievements in activities, in particular the horse riding that is on offer at the organisation's farm. They enter competitions, maintain their own equipment and have developed a healthy level of rivalry, but also support, among the group. The home benefits from properties in other parts of the country that allow young people to experience different areas and activities while on holiday. Young people also participate in individual activities within their local community. For example, one young person attends a table-tennis club and two others are in separate cadet groups. The result is that young people are able to improve their social skills and presentation, as well as their health.

Young people are supported to express their wishes and feelings on a regular basis. This is achieved in formal settings such as the young people's meetings and their key-work sessions, or informally over their evening meal. Young people confirmed that they share their views regularly and talk freely within the group meeting during the inspection.

Complaints raised by young people are dealt with in a speedy manner, and young people's responses to the outcomes are recorded. However, the process of how complaints are dealt with and what they can do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome is not made clear in the information available.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Comprehensive risk assessments identify young people's individual vulnerabilities. Although criteria for the measurement of risks are available, the evaluations that lead to the completion of the assessment are not recorded. Young people confirm that they read and discuss the issues in risk assessments and prior to their reviews. However, these remain professional documents and do not give young people a sense of the story of their progression. This will be of particular importance, should they wish to read their records in the future when they are adults. Individual risks identified do not always translate to other strategic documents that offer an overview of the home. In addition, there is no individual evaluation of risk to each young person in a holistic way at the point of admission. The result is that information is dealt with in isolation and records do not demonstrate that mutual risks have been explored. Young people report that there are no bullying issues. Records show that, when issues do arise, they replicate those tensions often found in large families, and are dealt with succinctly and swiftly. This enhances the sense that young people have	

of being safe. When discussing levels of monitoring their movements, one young person said, 'I feel safe here – we are told they watch us for our safety, but I already feel safe.'

High staffing levels and young people's sense of security mean that the numbers of 'missing' episodes in this group of young people are low. Staff are aware of the procedures to follow if episodes do occur. A local police officer stated that the staff 'do all that they can to locate the young person before ringing us'. This limits the opportunities for young people to be stigmatised.

As a result of young people's improved behaviours and their good relationships with staff, episodes of challenging behaviour are appropriately dealt with at an early stage. However, there are occasions where physical intervention is necessary to prevent injury to other young people and staff. All staff are appropriately trained in de-escalating and restraint techniques, and how to ensure that young people receive appropriate care following an incident. This ensures that young people are protected within the home, from themselves and others.

Sanctions are used effectively but minimally to address behaviours. A restorative approach has been successfully adopted and young people are able to learn from these experiences. Rewards are used to good effect, empowering young people to develop a sense of empathy and improving social skills, which benefit them now and in their future lives.

The content of records of such as key-worker sessions and risk assessments does not always contain an evaluation of a given situation or the reasons why subsequent actions are taken. It continues to be 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	Requires improvement
The registered manager is appropriately qualified and has been managing this home since it opened in 2005. He is supported by an experienced and motivated senior management team. Young people, staff, parents and other professionals all report very positively about his management style. A parent said that he was 'very happy with the manager'. The manager has a clear sense of both the strengths and weakness of the home, and has produced a workforce development plan. All staff hold the requisite level 3 qualification, apart from those who have recently joined the team, who remain within the timescales for qualification. There is an up-to-date training matrix in place, but this details that a range of mandatory training is outside of the timescales indicated within the plan. The result is that overall practice does not take account of recent guidance and information that would further enhance the	

knowledge and skills of all the staff.

Recruitment practice is robust, ensuring that young people are not cared for by people who may pose a risk to them. However, induction and appraisal processes do not demonstrate the evaluation undertaken to reach decisions about suitability and continued competence. Formal supervision is regular, but records indicate that sessions are brief and do not include reflective practice. This does not allow staff to continue develop their practice or recognise concepts such as 'unconscious bias' that impact on their levels of performance.

The home's statement of purpose details the care to be provided to young people. It outlines where this home fits within the company and in relation to the organisation's school. Current young people are appropriately accommodated at the home and all, with the exception of the latest young person who did not express an opinion, stated a desire to remain until adulthood. This stability will enhance their chances of success in all areas of their lives.

The children's guide is a colourful document which can be personalised for each young person. It provides 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. However, these do not include equality services, such as those serving young people with diverse needs.

The manager conducts an annual locality risk assessment. However, this does not include the full range of issues identified in current guidance and does not take account of the views of the professionals involved in the care of young people. This limits the manager's ability continually to assess the safety of the young people specifically in this location.

The manager has clear internal monitoring processes. The required report that results from such monitoring neither evaluates the findings nor proactively implements the lessons learned to sustain and improve practice. This limits his ability to effect change within the team and drive forward continuous professional development.

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 children looked after 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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