

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC064931
Inspector	Michele Hargan
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Pear Tree Projects Limited
Registered person address	Toy Top Farm Houghton Bank, Heighington Darlington County Durham DL2 2UQ
Responsible individual	David Anthony John Bartlett
Registered manager	Michael Crisp
Date of last inspection	02/01/2014

Inspection date	26/08/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	RSA CIE checked no issues

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Staff are good at ensuring young people are safe and young people say they feel safe. Staff take appropriate action when young people put themselves at risk. Actions taken by staff to reduce levels of risk need to be recorded within young people's individual risk assessments. Staff provide high levels of supervision and structure to support young people. A member of staff said, 'we always know where our young people are.' As a result of the care they receive young people's anxious feelings lessen and they learn safer ways to manage difficult feelings.

Staff provide a good quality of care to young people. They understand that young people may communicate their feelings through their behaviour. This understanding helps staff to provide appropriate care for young people. Young people are responded to as individuals and this helps them understand more about their own needs. One member of staff reported that making a positive difference is about 'spending quality time with young people'. Young people highly rate the care they receive from staff.

Staff have effective relationships with young people. Young people are able to raise complaints and they receive an appropriate response. This approach builds trusting relationships between staff and young people. Any complaints from young people need to be logged in full with the outcome of the investigation clearly recorded, as required by legislation. It is not necessary to routinely ask young people to sign

documents to demonstrate receipt of services to which they are entitled. This undermines the work that staff do to establish rapport and trust with young people.

Young people have good outcomes. They receive individual help to support them to return to education, with the transition to a new school and with developing work skills. Residential staff help young people in school. 'I want young people to know I am there for support,' a member of staff said. Young people take part in a wide range of purposeful leisure activities. Young people said they, 'like working on the farm'. Staff encourage young people to develop their independent living skills by taking appropriate responsibility for some aspects of their daily living. This results in young people's improved emotional and physical wellbeing.

Leadership and management of the home are good. The Registered Manager improves the service as outlined within the development plan for the home. One of the strengths of the staff team is that they are a diverse group in terms of gender, age, skills and experience. Staff turnover is very low. There are no requirements or recommendations outstanding for the home. The Registered Manager develops ways to improve the availability of staff to meet young people's needs. Young people needs are at the forefront of planned improvements.

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
02/01/2014	Interim	good progress
23/07/2013	Full	good
05/12/2012	Interim	satisfactory progress
27/06/2012	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
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation. In particular to record any complaint even though they have been investigated and found not to have been upheld. (Regulation 24 (5))	27/09/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that written records are kept by the home when a child goes missing detail action taken by staff, the circumstances of the child's return, any action taken in light of those reasons. In particular to make clear within risk assessments what action staff have taken and may need to continue to take to reduce risks to young people (NMS 5.10)
- ensure that risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel. In particular this relates to the practice of requiring young people to provide a signature when they receive medication, pocket money and clothing money, and take part in young people's meetings. (NMS 10.3)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people live in an atmosphere which is structured, consistent, predictable and calm. They receive support from staff to stay safe through high levels of supervision and structure. Young people learn they can rely on staff and the structure they provide. This helps young people to relax and increases their willingness to participate in daily routines. Social workers see improvements in young people. 'He looks well and is taking part on activities.' 'He's a different lad.' This approach increases the young people's willingness to take part in activities that are new to them building self-esteem and confidence.

Young people's emotional and physical wellbeing improves because of the care and support they receive. Staff ensure young people access health services they need and they work in partnership with other professionals. For example informal visits take place by the police aimed at raising young people's awareness about the consequences of their behaviour. Social workers, staff and parents all described significant improvements in yp's emotional and physical wellbeing. 'They were very quick at registering him with a dentist and GP' and 'we were taken aback by how well he looked.' A social worker said. Young people gain a better understanding about good emotional and physical wellbeing. This increases the likelihood of improved health as adults.

Young people receive support from staff aimed at promoting their participation in education. Staff are sensitive to the individual needs of young people who have been out of education. 'He's spent time in a classroom, it's a long time since he did that.' A social worker said. Staff help young people prepare for starting a new school. 'He's had visits to the school, he liked the animals, being outdoors, he wasn't managing at his previous school.' Another social worker said. Young people experience wider education opportunities for example through visits to places of historical interest and holidays abroad. This approach increases the likelihood of improved educational attainment and employment in adulthood.

Young people have daily opportunities to take part in activities which promote self-confidence and build emotional resilience. These range from routine activities like preparing to eat together, cleaning their bedrooms along with community based activities, like bike rides, going to the gym and visits to the seaside. 'Everyone has job at meal times' said a residential worker. 'There is too much to do.' A young person said. These experiences help young people realise more about their true abilities and future potential.

Young people receive support from staff to maintain relationships with members of their family. Staff supervise some visits by young people to see their families or help young people to do so independently. 'Staff have been very proactive they make the

contact arrangements.’ A social worker said. Parents and social workers feel welcomed by staff and are kept up to date about what is going on for young people. Parents and cares are welcome to visit young people at the home. Staff work in partnership with people who are significant to the young person. Young people experience cooperation between the adults in their lives building trust and feelings of safety.

Young people contribute to the running of the home through taking responsibility for some activities of daily living. Young people receive support and guidance from staff with carrying out tasks like cleaning their rooms and doing their washing. Young people have the opportunity to make reparation for inappropriate behaviour for example by carrying out extra chores. Conversely financial rewards are given to young people who take on additional age appropriate tasks. ‘He’s cottoned on that he can earn some extra money’. A member of staff said. In addition the available leisure activities promote young people’s independence and team work skills. These experiences help young people to think through the outcomes of the choices they make.

Quality of care

good

Staff make meaningful relationships with young people and they encourage young people to treat each other with respect. Staff understand that it is crucial to establish rapport and build trust with young people and that this needs to be in place to help young progress. Staff encourage young people to think about the consequences of their actions for themselves and others promoting improvements in young people’s behaviour over time. A young person’s social worker said, ‘he’s come on in leaps and bounds’. This builds a young person’s ability to take responsibility and aids understanding about trusting relationships.

Staff ensure young people have the opportunity to express their views and opinions. Young people’s meetings take place every month and the Registered Manager reads and comments on these meetings. A person independent of the home visit’s once a month to speak to young people and to report on the quality of care. ‘Young people realise they have more choices.’ Said a member of staff about how they help young people make progress. Young people are asked to sign various records including sanctions, pocket and clothing allowances and young people’s meetings as a means of reducing risk. This practice is not necessary or in keeping with homely domestic settings. Staff give young people a confusing message about their trust worthiness in asking for written proof of this type from young people.

Staff support young people to understand when it would not be in their best interests to go along with their what they want to do. Instead staff ask other professionals to increase young people’s awareness about the reasons for this. ‘I tell them they can do well’ and ‘we keep chipping away a bit at a time.’ Said staff about ways in which

they help young people. This helps young people realise that staff want to support them to make good choices.

Staff ensure young people know how to raise concerns and complaints and these are investigated quickly. The young person's guide makes clear what to do in the event that they are unhappy about any aspect of the care they receive. Young people know that their concerns are treated seriously and acted on. The Registered Manager must ensure that all complaints of whatever type are recorded in full even those that are not upheld, as is required by legislation.

Staff care for young people in line with their individual need. They are flexible in their approach and recognise when young people may need additional support or a different approach. Staff prepare detailed reports of good quality which contribute to care planning. 'Each young person is given a photo album of all of the places they have been to and things they have done for them to keep when they leave.' A member of staff said. This approach captures positive memories and supports others with understanding of young people's progress and accomplishments.

Staff are good role models for young people who are of an age when issues of identity are crucial to their development. Young people can take part in a range of enjoyable and challenging leisure and recreational activities that they can master contributing to their sense of self. These include sporting and more adventurous activities like gorge walking, visits to places of local and historical interest. Young people also have opportunities to participate in rural pursuits such as animal husbandry, caring for horses and riding. 'He likes going to the farm.' A social worker said. Young people learn how to make good use of their leisure time. This furthers their opportunity to develop skills and increases confidence in their own abilities.

Staff help young people to understand the value of education and the positive impact that this can have on their future lives. Staff ensure that young people who learn best through practical experiences have the opportunity to do so. 'I like working on the farm.' A young person said. Young people's participation in a broad based education increases the likelihood of attainment of academic and skilled based qualifications.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people are safe and said they felt safe. Young people are very positive about the home overall. Asked what they would say to a new young person worried about living at the home. 'I'd tell them you'll be alright.' Young people said. Staff levels allow for the supervision of young people at all times aside from when they are in their bedrooms. This level of oversight reduces the risk of young people experiencing

bullying and harmful behaviour or accidents. Young people's experience and understanding about being safe and staying safe in increased.

Young people receive good support aimed at minimising the likelihood of their repeatedly going missing. The actions taken by staff as a result of any such concerns must be documented within the young person's risk assessments for reference and guidance purposes. The responses of staff help young people think about the consequences of risk taking behaviour.

Effective safeguarding systems are in place for the protection of young people. Staff know what to do in the event that any concern is raised with them and how to keep minimise risks to young people. 'We assess when it is safe for young people to have free time.' We have a strict no bullying policy'. Staff said. This approach assures the safety and welfare of young people.

Young people are held by staff only as a last resort to keep themselves and others safe. Staff are trained in Team Teach techniques so that de-escalation and distraction skills are used firstly in any challenging situation. Staff said. 'We know young people so well we can see they are building up for something.' Behaviour has improved for young people considering where they started from. Staff are sensitive to issues than can cause young people additional distress and influence their behaviour. Staff help young people learn that they have choices about how to respond when they have difficult feelings.

Staff are subjected to thorough recruitment checks. Once appointed there is an induction procedure in place. 'I was given the induction booklet on my first day.' A member of staff said. New staff are also expected to complete induction that meets the requirements of the children's workforce development council. Young people are cared for by staff who are suitable and safe.

Staff carry out regular checks to ensure that the building is well maintained and safe. The home is a large building situated in a quiet residential area that does not stand out from other houses in the area. A designated member of staff is responsible for carrying out checks of fire equipment and for organising practice fire drills. Young people see staff take practical steps to keep them safe, this promotes safer independent living in adulthood.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager is a suitably qualified and experienced person who has been in post since the home opened. The Registered Manager completes a report to demonstrate what improvements are taking place. There is good partnership working with the police, who visit the on an informal basis to promote good relationships with young people. Young people receive a consistent message from those involved with

them about what is in their best interests this promotes reductions in re-offending by young people.

The Registered Manager has a development plan in place showing planned changes aimed at improving the care young people receive. Consideration is given as to how to ensure staff performance is appraised in the most efficient way. As part of this process the focus is on how staff make relationships with young people so they feel safe. Staff support recognises areas for development aimed at building secure relationships with young people.

The manager and staff use an approach to caring for young people referred to in the statement of purpose as the 'Recovery Programme.' The statement of purpose goes on to read. 'We do not provide any therapeutic techniques and try to keep our approach as simple as possible.' Great emphasis is also placed on affording young people consistent opportunities to take part in meaningful activities. These stated aims are consistent with the findings of the inspection. The young person's guide reflects the main aims of the statement of purpose. This guide helps inform young people about what they can expect from living in the home and what is expected of them.

Young people take part in planned activities that are well funded and they receive the services and allowances to which they are entitled. The Registered Manager has devised a wide ranging written development plan which includes maintenance of the home. There are minor repairs required in bathrooms that the Registered Manager is attending to. The responsible individual authorises appropriate replacement of domestic items. Young people live in an environment that is homely, comfortable and in good repair promoting feelings of self- worth.

Young people have the opportunity to speak to an independent person who visits the home once a month. This person is an employee of the organisation without direct involvement in the home. The reports are very positive about the way the home is run and the quality of care that young people receive. The Registered Managers responses make clear the actions taken to address arising concerns. The young people's guide includes number of independent advocates available for young people to get in touch with. Young people and staff have someone independent of the home to talk to should they wish to do so.

Staff support young people to help them learn a range of ways in which to deal with difficult feelings and challenging behaviours. 'He's really come along way' A member of staff said. Young people's accomplishments are monitored and detailed reports are compiled covering all aspects of the young person's progress. 'The best part is when you can see the difference.' A member of staff said about the reports used to demonstrate young people's progress. The information contributes to young people's looked after reviews. It is shared with them and where appropriate members of their

family and their social workers. Young people receive support to reflect on behaviour that can diminish their life chances in adulthood. This approach helps young people make links between their feelings, thoughts and behaviour and promotes the development of foresight.

Staff are sufficient in number and have the necessary skills and experience to work with young people in their care. Staff receive monthly supervision and appraisal is ongoing. 'We always have three or four members of staff on duty, there is not much staff absence.' A member of staff said. Staff receive regular supervision and good support from the Registered Manager. Young people experience continuity of care from an established and stable staff team. This promotes trust and reduces young people's anxieties.

Staff promote young people's understanding about processes in which their views and feelings are key such as looked after reviews. 'I'm there so I know what's said.' They show me what they write' said young people. Independent visitor reports make clear where there is information missing from young people's file including looked after review minutes and action is taken to resolve this. This approach helps young people build their confidence with taking part in meetings about them.

Young people are cared for by staff who are mindful of their underlying needs and can tailor the care they offer accordingly. Staff hold good quality information to aid their understanding of young people's backgrounds and difficulties. Records are stored securely within the staff office which can also be locked. This approach helps young people feel understood and builds empathy.

The Registered Manager contacts the safeguarding authorities and regulator as required by legislation in light of any child protection issues. At such times the Registered Manager works in partnership with the designated professionals so that concerns are readily addressed. This approach reduces disruption and uncertainty for young people about their future plans.

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.