

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	11 April 2016
Unique reference number	SC066010
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Quality Protects Children Ltd
Registered person address	Quality Protects Children, Pacific Chambers, 11–13 Victoria Street, Liverpool L2 5QQ

Responsible individual	Anthony Nolan
Registered manager	Position vacant
Inspector	Simon Morley

Inspection date	11 April 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:	Requires improvement

SC066010

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people live in a friendly environment where the staff are caring, supportive and committed.
- Young people make good progress. When this is not the case, the manager and staff take effective action to overcome barriers to young people achieving.
- Staff have a good understanding of young people's diverse needs. Some staff are new but, overall, the team has the necessary experience and skills to generate good outcomes for young people.
- Young people are safe and the high quality of care leads to a significant reduction in the levels of their risk-taking behaviour.
- Under new leadership and management, there has been a strong focus on the needs of young people and ensuring that their experiences are positive. Other aspects such as administration, monitoring, review and evaluation still require improvement. This is not impacting negatively on young people's development and progress.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, particularly with regard to keeping records up-to-date, accurate, signed, dated and monitored, the registered person must: 13.—(2)(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	30 June 2016
Other records 37.—(2) The registered person must: (a) maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; (b) ensure that the records are kept up to date; and	30 June 2016
Review of quality of care 45.—(5) The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff.	30 June 2016

Recommendations

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

- ☐ The information set out in the Statement of Purpose is an essential part of the process of agreement between the registered person and placing authority that a placement in that home is the right one for that child, and that the home will be able to respond effectively to the child's assessed needs... ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.6).

In particular, review that aspect of the statement that indicates that the home is suitable for children with harmful sexual behaviours.

- ☐ The registered person must specify the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing from care or away from the home without permission and how staff should support the child on return to the home ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.28).

In particular, ensure that all children have a written individual 'missing from' protocol.

- ☐ Records must be kept detailing all individual incidents when children go missing from the home.... Evaluation of missing incidents should be undertaken to identify any gaps in training, skills or knowledge for staff or to record and retain evidence of what worked well. This evaluation should inform the review of the quality of care... ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.31).

In particular, maintain accurate and up-to-date records of 'safe and well' checks and 'return home' interviews.

- ☐ The registered person should agree with their local police force, procedures and guidance on police involvement with the home to reduce the unnecessary police involvement in managing behaviour and criminalisation of behaviours... ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 47, paragraph 9.40).
- ☐ The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs, and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11).

In particular, train staff to be able to recognise and prevent radicalisation.

- ☐ Any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people, of either gender, with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23 November 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
3 August 2015	Full	Requires improvement
30 September 2014	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
5 June 2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Staff nurture young people, providing them with understanding and empathy, and are committed to their success and positive well-being. Staff develop strong relationships with young people based on openness, honesty and trust. This helps young people to feel accepted and valued as individuals. They test the boundaries in place and, over time, make good progress. One young person explained, 'The manager was right, I now see the reasons why I should go to education.' All young people have made progress with their education, which is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The manager and staff have worked hard to find educational placements that suit the needs of young people. One young person enjoys online education with tutor support and, since starting this, she has made excellent progress. Another young person has two different educational settings and achieves well at both, with a day at home completing workbooks or enjoying educational trips out with staff. A third young person has improved her attendance and started to supplement this with online education. Staff's commitment to and persistent encouragement of young people have paid off. One young person commented, 'I have had English and maths drummed into me.' Staff promote vocational subjects, too, so that young people are able to pursue their interests in health and nutrition, drama, animal care, graphic design and IT skills. Staff help young people to further their interests through a good range of social and leisure activities. One young person regularly went to boxing but says, 'I don't need to go anymore as I am not angry now.' He still enjoys sparring with staff in the garden. Another went to a local youth group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people. One of the young people was encouraged to paint a wall in the chill-out room of the home in graffiti style. These activities contribute to young people's development and are a strong reflection of their diverse needs. Staff's investment in young people's welfare, the time spent with them and encouragement to achieve has also paid dividends in other aspects of their development. The home environment is friendly and settled, young peoples' social	

skills significantly improve and there is a big drop in risk-taking behaviour. Other professionals comment on this, for example describing young people as pleasant, positive and polite. Young people who previously displayed high risks start to enjoy free time without the need for constant supervision.

Young people are articulate and able to speak up for themselves. The manager and staff listen to young people and take what they say seriously. Decisions about their care and the running of the home take account of their views.

Young people's physical and emotional health improves. Staff support young people to attend their medical appointments, health assessments and check-ups. Young people have access to more specialist services if needed, for example children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Although young people may be reluctant to attend this service, staff persistently and sensitively encourage such support. Young people benefit from the safety and emotional security to reduce incidents of self-harm. Staff persuade young people to adopt a healthier lifestyle through exercise and improved diets, and discourage smoking, alcohol and substance misuse.

To help plan the transition to adulthood, young people complete assessments of their independence skills. These cover a wide range of skills including personal hygiene, household chores, food safety, budgeting, using public transport and knowing where to go for help. Staff identify future targets, but not all this work is signed or dated, making it hard to review and evaluate progress.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people are safe and feel safe. One commented, when talking about her circumstances, 'This is my safe house.' Risk-taking behaviour such as self-harm, offending behaviour and missing from home has reduced significantly. Safeguarding practice is strong, and involves local agencies such as the police and a local agency against child sexual exploitation. Effective systems of communication and working together help to safeguard and protect young people. Staff generally follow good care practice to ensure that young people do not go missing, and return safely on the occasions when they do. When practice has been	

less than good, the manager has taken swift action to improve staff performance. There have been no 'missing from home' incidents for three months.

Although details are kept of each 'missing from home' incident, staff do not always document 'safe and well' checks and 'return home' interviews. This compromises the manager's ability to analyse or collate any pertinent information that might have been shared by young people with other professionals. One young person did not have a fully developed 'missing from home' protocol in place for staff to refer to. However, staff do undertake regular key-working sessions with young people, improving their understanding of risks, and they are effective in reducing these. The manager also meets regularly with other agencies to review strategies when there are ongoing concerns about a young person's safety.

Good deliberation is given to any new placements. This ensures that the impact on the well-being of existing young people from a young person moving in is assessed and minimised.

Staff understand the reasons for young people's challenging behaviour, aggressive incidents, why they might self-harm and their individual vulnerabilities. Staff have developed different strategies of de-escalation and distraction techniques, avoiding triggers that make incidents worse or can stop them in the first place. Staff are resilient, patient and understanding in their approach. Physical intervention is a last resort to keep young people safe. There is thorough monitoring of such incidents with appropriate reflection, and young people are encouraged to behave more positively. Over time, this has led to a large reduction in the frequency of challenging behaviour and the need to use physical intervention. Young people now respond well to clear direction from and expectations of staff on acceptable and positive behaviour. Staff use the strong relationships they have built with young people to influence their behaviour and keep them safe. Agreeing the registered person's generic guidance on involvement with the local police and highlighting this to staff would reinforce current and future good practice.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The manager has been in post since September 2015. He has appropriate experience, but has not completed the registration process with Ofsted. The registered person provides additional on-site leadership and management, with	

support from an experienced service manager on four days a week. He is also supported by a deputy, who maintains management consistency when he is absent.

Since taking up post, the manager has focused on promoting the diverse needs of young people and ensuring that they progress in all aspects of their development. This has not been an easy task, given the weaknesses in the service when he started, and is further complicated by high staff turnover.

The manager has recruited new staff with relevant experience and appropriate skills. He is developing a strong and effective staff team that has given young people a positive period of consistency and stability. This is reflected in the good progress they are making. As one staff member commented, 'Things are like clockwork now.'

There is an independent visitor who checks on a monthly basis how well young people are safeguarded and whether their needs are being promoted. Written reports of these assessments lack thorough analysis and evaluation. This compromises the effectiveness of independent scrutiny to contribute to continuous development, and has not improved since the last inspection. Similarly, the registered person's own monitoring is weak in areas relating to the views of young people and stakeholders. It is inaccurate and not comprehensive enough to drive further improvement.

On a day-to-day basis, the manager's monitoring, review and evaluation have failed to highlight administrative errors in record keeping. Not all records are signed and dated, and staff rotas do not accurately show who has been on duty. Risk assessments and care plans do not always reflect up-to-date care practice and young people's needs. However, the staff work well as a team, and there are good levels of communication, support and supervision. This contributes to the high standards of care that young people receive, and minimises the impact of the shortfalls.

The staff are experienced, becoming more confident in their work, are motivated and have a range of skills. All staff have achieved – or, in the case of new staff, are working towards – the required qualification. There is a core training programme enhanced by opportunities for staff to further their knowledge in specific areas, such as therapeutic parenting, attachment and sexual health.

Recently planned training about radicalisation was cancelled, with no plans for staff to have this training in the near future. Young people currently in placement are

not assessed as being at risk of radicalisation. Training would help staff to be more aware of the potential signs. There is also a discrepancy between the statement of purpose, in terms of being able to support young people with sexually harmful behaviours, and the actual ability of staff to meet this need. This could be misleading for placing authorities that are considering making such a placement.

Otherwise, the aims and objectives set out in the statement of purpose are upheld, such as the provision of a 'high quality consistent and child-centred approach to enable the young people to achieve goals within and beyond their limits and abilities... creating opportunities for young people to work and play together in a range of activities in a stimulating and therapeutic warm and safe environment.'

The manager and staff strive to work well in partnership with other key agencies such as placing authorities, the police, health services, education and voluntary agencies. This helps to support young people to have all their individual needs met. When there are difficulties with other services fulfilling their responsibilities to young people, the manager and registered person will challenge this on their behalf.

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 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards'.

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