

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	18/05/2015
Unique reference number	SC066115
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Alliance Care & Education Limited
Registered person address	Brow Top Farm, Quernmore, LANCASTER, LA2 0QW

Responsible individual	Mr Andrew Taylor
Registered manager	Mr Martin Evans
Inspector	Mr Mark Kersh

Inspection date	18/05/2015
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	Requires improvement
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC066115

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- There are few changes in the staff team which means that young people are able to enjoy stable relationships and this helps them grow in confidence.
- Young people are supported to attend education with realistic targets being in place for them to achieve. This benefits young people and prepares them well for adult life.
- Young people enjoy sound relationships with staff members and all staff know each young person and their needs well.
- Young people's health, including their emotional, social and psychological needs is met.
- Young people are safe in the home and the environment is pleasantly decorated, furnished and free from hazards.
- All young people have made progress from their starting points at the home and have clear plans in place.
- Staff members are supported in their role through supervision and team meetings and are able to reflect on the work they do with young people.
- The new manager fully understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and continues to implement changes, which are effective and supportive of young people and staff.
- The manager is not afraid to challenge placing authorities when he considers their responses are not effective.
- Following the inspection improvements have been identified in relation to seeking young people's views and wishes, staff having the skills to interpret young people's behaviour and understand their responsibilities in relation to protecting young people and the Statement of Purpose document needs revising.

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
ensure that staff ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare (Regulation 7 (2) (a) (i))	22/06/2015
ensure that staff understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children (Regulation (11) (a) (ix))	22/06/2015
ensure that staff understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person (Regulation 12 (2) (a) (v))	22/06/2015
notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3) (b))	22/06/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure when a young person returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the young person to have an independent return home interview. (The Guide 9.30 page 45)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This section should outline:

- The home is registered to accommodate four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- The home is privately home owned and is located in a semi-rural location.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/02/2015	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
12/11/2014	CH - Full	Good
13/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Staff members know individual young people well and fully understand their needs. The relationships between staff members and young people are positive and this enables young people to grow in confidence and build on their self-worth. One young person says, 'staff are sound, they sort you out things every day, and take you places'. Young people know how to make a complaint and have access to information on the home's complaints procedure and contact details of independent people and organisations should they wish to raise a complaint without having to approach staff members or the manager. Each young person has a key worker and can approach any staff member or the manager confident that their concerns will be listened to and acted upon. There have been no complaints from young people. All young people's health needs are known and recorded within their plans. Young people have access to external professional health support and a clinical psychologist visits the home twice each month. This enables individual young people to receive support and guidance in relation to their emotional, social and psychological well-being. Young people are supported to understand their past and build resilience for their future; some have experienced neglect and abuse prior to living in this home. Young people are treated with dignity and respect which helps them to sustain attachments. Counselling and therapy is available to young people as described within the homes Statement of Purpose document. These arrangements assist young people to overcome any previous negative experiences they have had. The home has an on-site school which young people attend and this is staffed by professional teachers. Young people's attendance in school is good though their progress is variable. Education plans are clear on the targets individual young people are aspiring to and all have made significant progress in their education considering their starting point in the home. There are planned and informal social and recreational activities for young people to participate in, either individually or as a group. Young people's hobbies and interests are known and arrangements are in place for them to continue these with local services in the area. Staff members try to support and encourage young people to access community	

facilities and engage in leisure pursuits. For some this is successful, for example, being involved with the local Army cadets, playing snooker and going to the cinema. Other young people prefer to see friends and family and have been less engaging.

There are clear procedures for assessing information prior to young people being accommodated in the home and young people are welcomed during visits and when they arrive to live in the home. A recent new admission to the home has had a significant impact on the current group and there has been a period of instability. The manager has challenged the placing authority in relation to the lack of information and support they provided. This is to ensure appropriate support can be provided in line with young people's relevant plans.

During the period of instability, some formal arrangements with young people have not taken place, such as key worker sessions and young people's meetings and as result a requirement has been made to address this. This is to ensure young people's views are taken into account and they can influence the way the home operates on a daily basis. For example, enabling young people to contribute their preferences to menus and food choices and ensuring at all times they know their rights and entitlements.

Young people know their arrangements for contact with their families and friends and are able to meet with those people who are significant in their lives. Staff members facilitate some contact arrangements in line with individual young people's plans and transport them to and from contact. This ensures young people are able to keep in touch even when their family live far away from the home.

The home is now stable as some young people have moved on to other placements. The manager has worked closely with placing authorities to plan for most young people's moves. These plans identified that a move would benefit young people and not have a negative impact on their experiences and progress, which would have negatively impacted on them if they stayed together in the home.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
Young people are safe in the home and have individual risk assessments in place which are understood by staff members and provide them with strategies on how to respond to any issues of concern in relation to the safety of young people. Most young people are of an age where they make their own decisions and some have	

placed themselves at risk while being away from this home.

Staff members have run workshops with young people around issues of child sexual exploitation and grooming. These include young people's contributions where they respond to scenarios and answer questions following a DVD they watch. This educates young people on how to be safe and keep themselves safe and reduce risks when they are away from the home.

The missing persons and child sexual exploitation police officer says 'the home has had a very unsettled period of late which has involved a lot of police involvement as a result of the group dynamics and young people's behaviour'.

They report the home works well with them and that a meeting took place involving staff from the home and police members; this created a good opportunity for each agency to understand the processes and views of each other and to agree a number of actions. The most significant agreement was that the police would, when possible be privy to new referral information and if available would provide any information held. This would enable the manager to make placement decisions from the information they receive as to whether they could meet the needs of any new admission.

When young people are absent from the home or missing staff actively look for them, before reporting them to the police. There are no arrangements in place for young people to have an independent interview when returning to the home after being absent or missing. As a result, a recommendation has been made, to ensure staff members take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each young person.

Some young people's behaviour has caused concern and damage to property and assaults on staff have taken place. There have been a high number of calls to the police during the unsettled period, some of which are asking for police assistance.

Some staff member's responses to young people's inappropriate behaviour have not been consistent, and not all staff members are as confident or competent in dealing with these behavioural issues. For example, by using appropriate de-escalation techniques or creative alternative strategies. And, some staff members have not followed the correct procedure before calling for police assistance. This is a protocol looking at 10 points to consider before police are called to the home.

As a result, requirements have been made. This is to ensure staff members understand how young people's present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these. And, ensure young people's behaviour is not unnecessarily criminalised.

The selection and recruitment of staff is rigorous and prevents unsuitable adults from being able to work with young people in this home. Staff spoken with during this inspection demonstrated a clear understanding about child protection

procedures and reporting of any concerns. All are trained to recognise, respond and report any suspicions of abuse.

Young people live in a comfortable, nicely decorated and furnished and well-maintained home. There is sufficient space for both communal activity and privacy. The home is situated in a semi-rural location convenient for public transport which means that young people can exercise their independence in getting out and about to see family and friends.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
A new manager joined the home in November 2014 and in February 2015 successfully completed his interview with Ofsted to be the Registered Manager. He has completed his Level 5 in Leadership and Management and has the necessary experience to carry on his role. There is a stable staff group with most being employed since the home opened in 2009. The manager has identified areas of weakness and knows the strengths of the home. Regular supervision and staff meetings support individuals and the team to reflect on their practices and identify areas for improvement. The manager has implemented and identified training to equip all staff with the knowledge and necessary skills to carry out their role. The manager is not afraid to challenge placing authorities and external professionals when he feels the information and services they provide are inadequate. This ensures each young person's needs are correctly identified and that services are provided to meet such needs. This approach supports the quality of professional relationships the home has with placing and host authorities. The manager's most recent internal monitoring report demonstrates a good understanding of the shortfalls, where improvements need to be made and how these are going to be achieved in the home. Similarly, the external monitoring is thorough and provides constructive challenge to the operation of the home. Actions taken by the manager are clearly recorded within both monitoring reports as are consultations with young people, their families and external professionals. This shows comments made are acted upon in order to improve the services the home provides. The manager has a keen insight into the progress and development of each young person and knows each of them, their backgrounds and family history very well.	

He ensures that care planning focuses on improving outcomes and reducing risks for young people. He has refused placements where he feels young people's needs cannot be met or where the match may be unsuitable. This leads to greater stability for young people in the home.

The home's Statement of Purpose document is being revised to reflect the new quality standards and regulations. This document describes the services the home provides and is available and known by all staff members. Information about the range of young people's needs the home can meet is being considered by the provider. Currently the document describes the home as being able to meet the needs of young people with sexually harmful behaviours and young people convicted of arson. However, staff members are not trained sufficiently to manage such behaviours. As a result, a requirement has been made; this is to ensure the document accurately describes the services the home can provide and that a copy is sent to Ofsted.

A recommendation from the previous inspection has been met, this was in relation to investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are shared with the appropriate agencies and are handled fairly, quickly and in accordance with statutory guidance. The manager has implemented a procedure and informed all staff members of measures to be taken and who to contact should an investigation or suspicion arise. These arrangements protect young people and staff

There are good arrangements to ensure all appropriate agencies are notified of any significant event in the home, and during the unsettled period the manager kept Ofsted fully informed of the situation. This allows for strategies to be agreed and acted upon.

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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