

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	22/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC066115
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Alliance Care & Education Limited
Registered provider address	Brow Top Farm, Quernmore, Lancaster, LA2 0QW

Responsible individual	Andrew Taylor
Registered manager	Martin Evans
Inspector	Mark Kersh

Inspection date	22/08/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved 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

SC066115

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people make continuing and positive progress. This is because they enjoy stable placements.
- Young people benefit from living in a home where staff are warm and nurturing, and provide them with close, individualised support. This is achieved through strong relationships sustained between staff and young people and between young people themselves.
- Young people's physical health needs are met through local services. Regular therapy enables young people to reflect and manage their individual behaviours.
- Care planning is effective, relevant and up to date; as a result, young people's educational, social and emotional needs are met.
- Generally young people's views, wishes and feelings are listened to and acted on.
- Young people benefit from well-considered planning that is used to secure smooth moves into and out of the home.
- Staff are confident in identifying when young people may be at risk and consistently follow agreed strategies. Individual risks of self-harm and going missing have reduced significantly.
- Staff demonstrate well how to protect young people from child sexual exploitation and radicalisation, and to ensure online safety.
- Behaviour is managed well. Young people are supported by staff when in crisis. The actions staff take reduce any police involvement and prevent young people from being criminalised. Systems for debriefs following incidents are not taking place or routinely recorded.
- The management team support staff and all have high expectations and are ambitious for the young people to progress in the home.
- There are very few changes in the staff team, which means that young people are able to enjoy stable relationships with staff who support them to grow and develop. Staff do feel supported in the home, although supervision and induction is variable and staff appraisals have not taken place.

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 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
33: Employment of staff The registered person must ensure that all employees— Undertake appropriate continuing professional development (Regulation 33(a)) Receive practice-related induction, supervision and appraisal by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(b))	30/09/2016
16: Statement of purpose The registered person must— Keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and Notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16(3)(a)(b))	30/09/2016
35: Behaviour management policies and records To ensure that it can be shown that staff and young people have had an opportunity to discuss a measure of control the registered person must make sure that: Within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so, has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. Within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	30/09/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- The registered person is responsible for ensuring that all staff consistently follow the home's policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home's care. Everyone working at the home must understand their roles and responsibilities and what they are authorised to decide on their own initiative. There should be clear lines of accountability. Each home must have clear arrangements in place to maintain effective management when the manager is absent, off duty or on leave. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)
- 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)

Full report

Information about this children's home

- The home is registered to accommodate four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- The home is privately owned and is located in a semi-rural location.
- Some young people may have been placed at the home due to behavioural difficulties in which a family placement has broken down either temporarily or permanently. For other young people, reasons may include the family placement being unsuitable for various reasons. Such circumstances can leave the young person feeling unwanted, rejected and lost, as noted in the home's statement of purpose.
- Young people living in the home have the opportunity to benefit from therapeutic services. Where appropriately identified in their care plans, each young person has time allocated as part of the weekly planner to work with a therapist and to engage in the many forms of therapy, as outlined in the home's statement of purpose.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
19/05/2015	Full	Good
16/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/11/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people are making good progress and have positive experiences as a result of living in the home. Their needs are clearly identified and met through a combination of staff support and the involvement of other agencies. Young people experience stable and secure placements in the home. They form positive relationships with the staff and there is good evidence of mutual understanding, and respectful and trusting relationships. One young person commented, 'I know that the staff care about me and the others, even when we are messing around. They support me all the time and never judge me. They are good people.' Collectively young people agree they have made progress in the home from their starting points and are proud of their achievements. Young people's educational progress is effectively measured and reported on. This ensures that their current educational package is meeting their individual needs. Staff have been proactive in their roles, and they advocate well on young people's behalf. There are high expectations regarding the young people's motivation to learn, and confidence about pursuing plans that are more ambitious. For example, young people have progressed from the home's on-site school to local schools and all young people have education provision in place for the commencement of the September 2016 term. Attendance is consistent and young people's achievements are celebrated. Staff encourage and support young people to access the health services that they need. Young people are registered with local health services. Staff are knowledgeable about young people's health issues and liaise with specialists effectively. Detailed health plans show appointments attended and any reasons for intervention. As a result, the physical health needs of young people are consistently met. Robust medication procedures are understood and followed by staff. All medication in the home is stored securely and checked and signed for daily. This ensures that all medication in the home is accountable and only administered as prescribed. Staff have meaningful daily conversations with young people and formally consult with them. Records of young people's meetings demonstrate that staff actively seek their views on menus, activities, holidays and day-to-day matters affecting their experience of living in the home. Action is generally implemented from these young people's meetings, showing in most cases that their views are important to	

staff.

Young people's preferred holiday options and location has been discussed with them, although plans to implement these suggestions over the summer holiday have not been made. Staff reported that they took these suggestions back to the manager but the suggestions were not planned and young people therefore felt that their requests or views were ignored.

Staff recognise the importance of leisure activities in young people's development. Young people have access to a wide range of recreational activities, such as horse riding, gymnastics, trips to the seaside and attending Premier League football training sessions and matches. Staff encourage young people to pursue activities according to their personal interests and to join clubs and community activities, thus extending their social experiences and building their self-confidence and sense of identity. Young people enjoy being with staff, who respond to them with warmth and good humour.

Individual key-work sessions give young people opportunities to express their feelings and opinions and provide staff with opportunities to address young people's individual needs relating to managing their emotions.

Regular consultation with the therapist enables staff to understand the work young people do in their therapy sessions. The visiting therapist says, 'young people do invest in the therapy process and have made significant progress. Staff are not therapists but they do support the therapeutic work being carried out with young people. I have no concerns in between therapy sessions and feel staff support my work well.' This ensures that young people's emotional, social and psychological well-being is being met.

Young people are well prepared to move on from the home, both practically and emotionally. Staff encourage daily independence skills, which address all aspects of preparation for moving on. Young people often remain in contact with the home once they have left, either visiting or telephoning members of staff. They know that they are not alone as someone is always available to talk to at any time of the day or night, albeit as an informal source of support. Effective systems allow compatibility to be risk-assessed prior to a young person moving into the home. This minimises any potential impact on a young person or on the existing group of young people.

Independent advocates are available to young people as and when they are required, and subject to young people's agreement. Young people know how to complain or raise issues, all of which are responded to and acted on.

Young people benefit from positive family contact. Staff fully recognise the importance of family contact and they facilitate long-distance travel when required. They are flexible and accommodating to ensure that young people have a positive

experience. Families are welcomed at the home and feedback on questionnaires from parents is positive about the care the home provides. A parent who was contacted to confirm this commented, 'The staff at the home are excellent. They are very caring. They care about my child and that is what I can see.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people are protected by well-documented and carefully assessed risk management plans which staff implement in practice. Young people have gradually decreased their risk-taking behaviour as a result of a multi-agency approach to safeguarding, and the fact that they feel cared for and supported. Combined support from staff and engagement in regular therapy has enabled staff to have a positive impact on young people's lives. For example, staff recognise the triggers which cause young people to engage in self-harm. They are skilled and experienced in working directly with young people who self-harm, including those whose self-harm behaviours are potentially life-threatening. Effective strategies including one-to-one work to identify the cause of these behaviours means that incidents have reduced significantly in frequency and intensity. Regular meetings with the police missing from home and safeguarding coordinator allow information to be gathered and shared about local places where young people may be vulnerable and at risk. Staff know the local area and some of the issues prevalent within the local population well. This working together and knowledge, along with the safe area risk assessment, protects young people. There are currently no concerns in relation to child sexual exploitation, grooming or radicalisation. Young people are protected and feel safe in the home. Young people have limited access to the internet in the home, and if need be can use the facilities at the local library or access a computer situated within the on-site school. When young people go missing, staff are proactive, they go out and look for them and have been able to persuade them to return home safely. The length of time that young people are absent from the home is reducing significantly. Young people have not had any unauthorised absences since March 2016, which is significant progress. Staff adopt a positive approach to behaviour management, focusing on rewarding, praising and recognising good behaviour. The management team and staff evaluate sanctions to ensure that they are appropriate and are an effective tool in supporting young people to modify their behaviour. Staff follow a 10-point plan	

when young people are in crisis and displaying inappropriate behaviour. This prevents any unnecessary police involvement or young people being criminalised as a result of their actions. There are good relationships with the local police, who visit the home regularly and engage with the young people; they provide advice and support to the young people and staff.

Restraint incidents have reduced significantly since the last inspection in January 2016. This is because staff are teaching young people by example and are working very well as a team. Where incidents have required physical intervention these have been short in duration. However, there are no systems in place for staff to be debriefed following an incident of restraint. As a result a requirement is made. This is to ensure the management team enable staff to reflect and act upon how their own feelings and behaviour may be affected by the behaviour of the young people they care for. Young people do have a life space interview following an incident of restraint.

Robust recruitment processes are in place, to safeguard young people from unsuitable adults working with them. All checks on prospective employees are undertaken before they commence work at the home. During the inspection the responsible individual described the measures he and the manager take to ensure that all information in relation to prospective employees is scrutinised and verified.

The home provides young people with a welcoming and safe environment and is situated in a semi-rural location. Fire and health and safety checks are regularly undertaken. All maintenance work needed is attended to promptly and there are no financial issues should new furniture need to be bought.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The home has a suitably qualified manager who registered with Ofsted in February 2015. He has sufficient experience and qualifications to carry out his role effectively. There is an established management structure in place with an appointed deputy manager and assistant manager who are both in the process of obtaining their level 5 leadership and management awards. The assistant manager and deputy manager assisted throughout the inspection in a positive manner, demonstrating a good understanding of their role and commitment to providing a safe and effective service. However, lines of accountability within the management team could be clearer. Some key information required during the inspection was not readily available, as	

neither the assistant manager or deputy manager had access to it. This means that arrangements for the effective management of the home in the absence of the manager are not fully effective.

The statement of purpose is a well-detailed document that provides a good overview of the service. Staff are aware of its contents and the aims and objectives of the service. The good standard of care provided to young people and the consistently good progress they make demonstrate that the home is achieving its aims and objectives. However, it was identified that the registered manager had failed to provide Ofsted with an up-to-date version of the statement of purpose following its revision and the update of information within it. This is necessary to ensure that the regulator is kept informed of any changes in the home, particularly changes in staffing.

There are processes in place to enable the registered manager to monitor quality and safety across the service and identify areas for development. For example, following findings from monthly quality visits, some improvements had been made in areas including staff training and supervision. However, not all monitoring reports produced by an independent visitor were available in the home. This means that any areas identified for development are not able to be addressed by staff.

Staff morale is high; staff are motivated and demonstrate commitment to providing a quality service to the young people in their care. The registered manager has created a supportive environment within which staff feel able to share their views and express their concerns. Staff feel that the registered manager is approachable. One staff member commented, 'you can always have a discussion if there is something you are not sure about. There is an open door policy and managers are always available to talk to.'

However, formal supervision and appraisal has not been provided to some staff as often as it should be. Records demonstrate that some staff members had not received formal supervision for several months and, in some cases, appraisals had not been completed for over a year. This is an issue that has been identified by the registered manager as being in need of improvement. The process of bringing all supervisions and appraisals up to date has commenced. This means that staff will have the opportunity to reflect on their practice and identify their future development needs.

There is a comprehensive training programme in place, which helps to provide staff with the skills and knowledge required to provide safe, effective care. All but one staff member hold qualifications in caring for young people, with the remaining staff member due to embark on this training in the near future.

The training programme is flexible and adapted in line with the specific needs of young people. Training in areas such as autism and substance misuse are

examples of additional learning recently undertaken by the staff team. This helps to ensure that young people are cared for by staff with a good understanding of their needs and the support they require. However, induction training for new staff members is not always well planned or clearly recorded. This means that the registered manager is not able to monitor the induction training provided to new employees or to ensure that they have received adequate training and support at the start of their employment.

Managers ensure that young people's care plans are comprehensive and developed in line with their individual needs. They ensure that the home is centred on the needs of young people. For example, when considering new referrals, the registered manager carefully considers the needs of the young people resident in the home. A social worker of one of the young people who lived at the home confirmed that the registered manager always spoke with him about any potential new admissions.

Managers and staff work in a positive, effective manner with other agencies and professionals. They communicate effectively and provide a valuable contribution within reviews. One external professional commented, 'communication is very good. We are able to have open and frank discussions.' Another commented, 'I find them (managers and staff) open, honest and transparent. She [young person] wouldn't be where she was now if it wasn't for the approach of the staff. There is a very holistic approach. They are doing a great job in my view.'

This confirms that young people's needs and their progress are at the centre of the home's practice. The registered manager champions the rights and needs of young people and is able to challenge on young people's behalf where their needs are not being met.

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 after children looked 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 that 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 that 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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