

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	05/07/2016
Unique reference number	SC066565
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	New Options Limited
Registered provider address	Turnpike Gate House, Alcester Heath, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 5JG

Responsible individual	Graham Norris
Registered manager	Joanne Carter
Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm

Inspection date	05/08/2016
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

SC066565

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The majority of young people's experiences and outcomes progressively improve as a direct consequence of their good care and protection. They benefit from consistent and stable staff teams who invest in them.
- Person-centred care planning meets young people's assessed needs and the greater emphasis on showing progress and achievements is starting to embed.
- Young people are safer as a result of improved care practices and lessons learned from complaints and allegations. Professionals raise no safety and welfare concerns about the young people living at the home.
- Staff care about the young people. Positive relationships between staff and young people afford them consistency and stability in their lives.
- Effective communication methods enable positive interactions that provide staff with a good understanding of young people's wishes, feelings and motivations.
- The majority of staff express satisfaction in their roles and responsibilities. Their training enables them to meet the specific needs of young people arising from their autism, complex learning disabilities and health conditions as well as safeguarding matters, such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation.
- The management team has developed into a well-integrated childcare service. It has a clear vision of how services are to be delivered to the young people in its care.
- The majority of strengths and weaknesses are identified and resolved by the manager, who, with the management team, drives forward continuous improvement.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

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

- As set out in Regulations 31–33, the registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguard children and minimise potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1). Specifically, the registered person must ensure that the regular supervision of all staff is in clear evidence.
- All staff must have their performance and fitness to carry out their roles 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. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4). Specifically, they should ensure that there are appropriately detailed impact risk assessments that show the potential risks to the current group of young people and vice versa, and that restraint records make clear the type of intervention used and the timescale.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care, accommodation and education for children and young people. The home offers a specialised service to 26 children and young people with an autistic spectrum condition and associated learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
21/09/2015	Full	Requires improvement
11/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
11/12/2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The majority of young people's experiences and outcomes progressively improve as a direct consequence of their good care and protection. Staff have a well-informed understanding of the young people's unique personalities and diverse needs arising from their autism and complex learning disabilities. Effective communication methods, such as picture exchange communication, iPads, talking mats and key cards enable interactions that provide staff with a good understanding of young people's wishes, feelings and motivations. This is particularly relevant for those young people with no verbal communication. Positive relationships between staff and young people afford them consistency and stability in their lives. Person-centred care planning meets young people's assessed needs and promotes child-focused outcomes. However, not all impact risk assessments are sufficiently detailed, although this has no negative impact on the current group of residents as staff have a good awareness of their needs. Clinical assessments of young people's cognitive development needs feed into the early years foundation framework. This will underpin learning through play to support young people to attain their goals. The impact of this progress is evident in the achievements that young people are making. Although this new development needs time to embed fully, young people's progress comes to life through the words and pictures in their plans. These include, for example, exploring new foods, engaging in healthcare treatments, counting to five, completing shopping activities and spending more time with staff and other young people both in the home and the community. Clinical interventions have also improved young people's living space, ensuring compatible group dynamic and safer environments. This is particularly helpful in managing young people's anxiety levels. A parent said, 'A flat was adapted for [name of the child] to have his own space rather than sharing with other young people and all the stress that communal living seemed to be causing him.' Young people are enabled to attend healthcare appointments. Illness and accidents are promptly acted on through visits to healthcare services, which minimises the risks to their health and safety. Included are those young people whose current and future interests are determined through child-focused 'best interests' meetings. This enables the home to work in partnership with other stakeholders to	

weigh up the best course of action when a young person does not have the capacity to make informed decisions. This promotes their dignity and welfare, and anti-oppressive practices. Access to specialist services and the clinical team supports young people's good health and development needs. Newly implemented medication systems make for a more robust structure that serves to ensure a clear audit trail and minimise any further medication errors.

An aligned education inspection conducted by Ofsted judged the organisation's education provision to be good. All young people experience high attendance levels and they progress within their attainment goals. The well-established, strong relationships between the home and school continue to promote good communication between the services, keeping everyone up to date with the young people's progress. After school, learning flows into their time away from school too. They access a range of leisure and informal learning opportunities, helping them to learn new skills and maximise their potential. Examples include visiting places of interest, dining out, going shopping and getting a haircut. Fun activities such as swimming, relaxing in bedrooms, playing on iPads, listening to music, pampering sessions and using equipment in the grounds, provide the young people with hours of fun. A parent said: 'Our son benefits greatly from the outdoor space where he can run, swing and trampoline.'

Most young people benefit from having regular contact with their families. Staff effectively facilitate contact either on the premises or in the family home. This helps to maintain positive bonds between young people and important people in their lives.

The staff team supports young people who have made the transition to adult placements with sensitivity and care. Their work with placing authorities helps to ensure that suitable placements meet the young adult's needs. Extended notice periods are allowed if this is deemed to be in their best interests. Young people, irrespective of their age and abilities, are encouraged to learn independent skills. As a result, those who are able develop self-care skills can shop and prepare meals and make choices with no or minimal prompting.

Improvements in the young people's physical environment make for a pleasant home for them to live in. Bespoke rooms are adapted to meet young people's individual needs and preferences, taking into account their choices, tolerance levels and risks. Consequently, rooms range from being highly personalised to the bare minimum. A redecoration programme ensures that continuing improvements in the home support the ongoing repairs. The manager, in conjunction with the facilities

manager, oversees these plans.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Good protective measures promote young people's safety and welfare, which minimises the potential threats to their vulnerabilities. Staff have a good understanding of managing young people's individual risks and know how to protect them. Good supervision of the young people results in no missing-from-care episodes or child sexual exploitation issues, although measures are in place to cover these eventualities. Professionals raise no safety and welfare concerns about the young people. A social worker described the staff team as being 'safety conscious'. Improved and sustained staffing levels that include reliable core staff teams that are familiar to the young people ensure that the routines and boundaries support their behavioural plans. This stimulates the building of positive and trusting bonds between the young people and staff. Staff training in a relevant behaviour management technique, coupled with their tuition in caring for this specific group of young people, helps them to manage effectively some highly challenging behaviours, such as self-harm and sexualised behaviours. Professional stakeholders comment positively about how staff handle challenging behaviour. A parent said, 'We have seen on many occasions how staff respond when [name of young person] has a "meltdown" and have been very impressed by their professionalism and the calm way incidents are handled, usually as a team effort.' The manager has undertaken a review of restrictive practices to ensure that they remain appropriately risk assessed and safe. Specific behaviour management strategies used for those who present with very high levels of anxiety and associated risks have been shared with safeguarding professionals, who raise no concerns. This promotes transparent practice. Similarly, changes in young people's behaviours are brought to the attention of the clinical team and healthcare services, who take prompt action and review individual plans. This helps to rule out any underlying medical conditions that may impact on young people's behaviours and well-being. Physical intervention records clearly demonstrate that staff take decisive action to de-escalate situations to prevent outbursts and only use minimal physical	

intervention as a last resort for safety purposes. Scrutiny of the associated records allow for management monitoring to identify trends and other key indicators that help to analyse potential triggers so that young people receive the appropriate support. Although there is no negative bearing on young people's welfare, some of the physical intervention records lack clarity with respect to the type of measure used and the duration of the intervention.

Allegations against staff are referred to the designated officer, and allow for social care professionals and parents to be involved in the process. A transparent process of investigation enables lessons to be learned and informs current practice. The manager has acted on the few complaints made about aspects of young people's care by way of thorough investigation into the issues raised. The registered manager has made several unsuccessful attempts to obtain complainants' response to complaint outcomes to ensure that they are satisfied with the outcomes.

Good recruitment practices ensure that the adults appointed are safe and suitable to care for young people with needs arising from their autism and complex learning disabilities.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
Young people increasingly benefit from a strong leadership team overseeing their care, help and protection. Over the last 18 months, the team has developed into a holistic childcare service that integrates residential, education and healthcare provision with a clear vision of how services are to be delivered. The registered manager is motivated and has the relevant qualifications and a wealth of experience in working with children and young people who have disabilities. In addition, her new learning with respect to managing an autism-specific service promotes her credibility with parents and professionals. Improvements made since the last inspection include actions taken to address the recommendations raised at that time. Good staff retention levels promote staff sufficiency and consistent care practices that provide a stable home. Staff morale is good. Staff's interest in the young people shows in their positive interventions and attitude towards their good progress. The manager values and recognises the positive team spirit and shows appreciation for a better calibre of staff who are familiar with the young people's individual personalities. She said, 'We have really	

good staff who understand the young people.’ A greater emphasis on evidencing young people’s progress and achievements is evolving and indicates the difference that the home makes to their lives.

Improved communication between the home and placing authorities ensures that stakeholders receive timely reports of incidents from the service. Similarly, improved information contained in monthly reports keeps parents and professionals up to date with young people’s progress.

The majority of staff confirm that they feel well supported to carry out their designated roles and responsibilities. Although the levels of supervision have increased, not all staff supervision and appraisals are up to date. This includes one new starter who according to the records has not received supervision since starting in March 2016. Staff report that supervision is useful to them. The records indicate a good quality, breadth and depth of discussion with a focus on young people and their training and development needs. A staff member described the training as ‘fab’.

The organisation is aspirational for all staff to attain the appropriate qualifications and skills to meet the young people’s diverse needs. Plan are in place to ensure that this is achieved. Staff complete a wide range of basic and more advanced training to meet the specific needs of young people. In addition, staff keep up to date with training in safeguarding matters, such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation.

The manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weakness of the home and her improvement and contingency plans address the identified deficits. This is having a positive impact on the care, safety and well-being of young people. Management monitoring systems have improved, with the development of electronic information systems that allow for improved analysis. However, the manager’s oversight of the tasks she delegates to others does not include the same level of scrutiny. This means that she does not have the most up-to-date information in their absence, despite this being her overall responsibility. The manager has undertaken to remedy this minor shortfall, which has caused no detriment to young people. The inclusion of evidence of staff consultation in the review report to Ofsted satisfies the recommendation raised at the last inspection.

The monthly monitoring reports carried out by the independent visitor evaluate care practices in a manner that influences improvements in the home. The visitor is good at regularly seeking feedback from parents, social workers, staff and, where possible, young people. Recommendations raised by the visitor have declined over several months, which indicates that the manager has taken on board the ‘critical friend’ approach and has made improvements. The visitor’s clear appraisal that young people are effectively safeguarded and the conduct of the home promotes their well-being reassures the provider and stakeholders that young people are

safe and well cared for.

The responsible individual provides good support on site to the management and staff team. He facilitates effective communication in the different meeting forums that keep everyone up to date with the young people's needs and service developments. This promotes consistency and reinforces expectations.

The manager has reported notifiable incidents to Ofsted. This fully informs the regulator about the event, which enables it to act on any safeguarding concerns.

Effective relationships forged with parents and other agencies, such as the designated officer, social workers and healthcare professionals, make for good practice in partnership working. Positive comments from parents and professionals indicate satisfaction with care practices. A parent reported, 'Over the past six years, I have become more and more impressed by the dedication of staff in a very challenging role. Some staff [past and present] are outstanding. There have been many changes [to personnel and management structure]. It's not perfect, but we are very grateful for [name of service's] commitment and the way they work with us as parents.'

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 the '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 whom 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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