

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC066917
Inspector	Marina Tully
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Oracle Care Limited
Registered person address	Unit 1 Dane Valley Mill Havannah Street CONGLETON Cheshire CW12 2AH
Responsible individual	Steven Bromley
Registered manager	Darren Elliott
Date of last inspection	19/03/2014

Inspection date	16/12/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has not been any enforcement action since the last inspection.

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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The home continues to provide an exceptional standard of care; young people therefore make remarkable progress from the start of their placements. Staff are knowledgeable and have high aspirations for young people: they demonstrate great commitment to improving outcomes in all areas. The home provides young people with a warm, nurturing and stable home environment where they are fully supported to reach their full potential. This is reflected in social workers comments 'the home provides high quality care and is really child focused, staff are good advocates for young people.'

Young people are happy, safe and content in the home. They benefit from consistent support, routines and boundaries. Consequently, they form secure attachments with staff and each other. Young people have highly personalised care plans which inform staff of how to meet their full range of needs.

Risk taking behaviour significantly decreases from the start of placement. This is down to a competent, well trained team; excellent collaborative working and effective therapy. As a result, young people grow in confidence and benefit from an improved self-esteem. This is reflected in feedback from professionals who say 'staff display warmth, consistency and boundaries that allow young people to feel safe

and secure.' Furthermore, young people report that the quality of care is 'outstanding'.

The manager demonstrates strong leadership and enthusiasm towards continual improvement. Staff feel supported and enjoy working at the home, this is reflected in young people's comments 'all staff love working here, I'd say they're outstanding.' Staff are provided with on-going training, as well as guidance and support from the in-house therapy service. Not only does this enhance their knowledge and understanding; it builds their own resilience and enables them to provide outstanding care to vulnerable young people.

To build on the existing excellent practice within the home, two recommendations have been in respect of staff supervision and training.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This service offers long-term therapeutic placements for up to two young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is one of several homes owned and managed by a limited company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/03/2014	Interim	good progress
25/10/2013	Full	outstanding
14/11/2012	Interim	good progress
04/07/2012	Full	good

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

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff have access to support and advice, and are provided with regular supervision. This is in relation to ensuring staff receive regular supervision in line company policy (NMS 19.4)
- ensure the learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness at least annually and if necessary update. This is in relation to evaluating the effectiveness of online training and enabling staff to reflect, as a team, on their learning. (NMS 18.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people make unquestionable progress from the start of their placement. Social workers say 'the holistic integration of education, care and therapeutic interventions has yielded positive outcomes for young people.'

Young people recognise their achievements and state, 'I have made loads of progress considering where I was when I moved in. My free time has increased due to better behaviour and building up staff's trust.'

Young people have excellent attendance at college due to their improved routines and self-esteem. They are ambitious and self-assured and take all the necessary steps to realise their goals. For example, young people who want a career in animal care, undertake voluntary work in a local animal sanctuary. Additionally, young people have acquired certificates in first aid and achieved citizenship awards. Not only does this enhance their skills and confidence, it maximises their employment opportunities through gaining valuable experience.

Young people enjoy excellent physical and emotional health. They benefit from accessing a wide range of primary health services such as the dentist and opticians, and all routine appointments are well attended. When necessary, young people are linked into more specialist services such as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Furthermore, the in-house therapist addresses young people's emotional needs through building their resilience and teaching them better coping strategies during weekly therapy sessions.

Young people are aware of the importance of good health and take effective measures to stay healthy. For example, they exercise regularly and enjoy a healthy, nutritional diet. Young people living in the home do not smoke, drink alcohol or take drugs. As a result, young people are fit and healthy and take pride and responsibility in promoting their own health.

A key strength is young people's preparation for independent living. Young people develop all the necessary skills to move onto adulthood. For example, they shop, do their own laundry and keep their living space clean and tidy. Young people often cook their own meals; what is more, they enjoy doing so. Some young people are learning how to drive and are very proud of their achievements. Young people are confident and skilled at taking care of their own needs, which vastly improves their chances of succeeding when living alone.

Contact with families is promoted in line with young people's individual care plans. Young people therefore benefit from spending quality time with their families in a safe and supported environment. This means young people gain a genuine

understanding of their background and current situation, as well as developing a positive identity.

Young people are more confident and self-aware from the start of their placements. They benefit from taking part in a wide range of activities, such as football, horse riding, athletics, and holidays on a barge.

Quality of care

outstanding

Young people consistently report that the quality of care within the home is 'outstanding.'

Staff spend quality time with young people, showing a sincere interest in their progress and welfare. Staff have fostered excellent relationships through listening, showing empathy and being consistent with their care. There is a culture of mutual respect and tolerance within the home, as well as a feeling of genuine warmth. Consequently, young people are engaging fully with staff and therapy. This leads to young people being enabled to make more positive choices and sustain positive relationships with staff and each other.

The service in-house therapy plays a central role in supporting young people to effect change and regulate their behaviour more appropriately. This is further enhanced by staff's use of effective behaviour management strategies. The homes' records demonstrate a vast improvement in young people's behaviour. For example, records show that rewards far outnumber sanctions and the use of restraint is extremely rare. This demonstrates that young people are enabled to adhere to boundaries, and quality relationships within the home are established and sustained.

Young people benefit from updated comprehensive care plans and risk assessments. This has led to a significant improvement in their progress in all areas of their lives. Staff work extremely well with partners such as colleges, social workers, youth offending service, police and parents. Quality partnership working ensures young people's welfare is at the centre of a committed team with shared goals and expectations. This is reflected in feedback from other professionals who state, 'the home has been extremely forthcoming at ensuring we have all of the information we need.' 'We have excellent links with this home.'

The team demonstrates a conscientious approach to young people's participation in important matters which affects their lives. Staff are proactive at seeking the views of young people and ensuring they have genuine input and real choices. For example, young people regularly meet to review the homes' development plan and make decisions about activities, meals and improvements. Young people confirm that they are involved and feel listened to. A young person said 'I asked for my bedroom to be blue before I moved in and it was.' A major strength is young people's involvement with the recruitment of staff. Here young people have devised their own interview

questions and been included in the interviewing and selection process. As a result, young people feel valued and respected, as well as gaining valuable experience of the recruitment process.

Complaints are extremely rare. Young people say, 'I know how to complain but I have never had to make one.' The home has a very clear and accessible complaints system that is widely promoted within the home. Young people are fully aware of the complaints procedure and know who can help them if ever needed. The young person's guide is current and young person centred, including details of a range of advocacy support services. The highly effective complaints procedure further enhances young people's safety within the home.

Staff support young people with their educational attainment through excellent collaborative working with the in-house school and local colleges. Staff ensure achievement goes beyond education by getting young people to engage in vocational and leisure activities. For example, they engage in voluntary work and enrichment activities within the local community.

Young people feel respected and therefore respect others. Young people's diversity, such as culture, heritage and ability, is recognised and celebrated. They therefore enjoy living in an environment that promotes equality of opportunity and difference and diversity is fully embraced.

Medication procedures are well organised, ensuring that prescribed medication is given as directed. Staff follow clear guidance when administering medicines within the home and receive effective training on administering medication. Consequently, young people benefit from a suitably trained staff team who are competent to care for their medical needs.

The home is maintained to a high standard. Staff have undoubtedly created a warm, nurturing homely environment where young people feel secure and safe and thrive from excellent quality of care.

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

Young people are safe and report that they feel safe. They are protected by robust risk assessments and a well-trained, competent staff team. Young people's risk taking behaviour significantly reduces from the start of their placements. Young people are given a wide range of support to ensure they are fully protected. For example, in-house therapy complements the rigorous individual work undertaken by staff. Consequently, young people are making safer choices due to increased resilience and improved emotional health.

Young people do not go missing from home. Staff ensure they know the whereabouts of young people and keep in touch with them when away from the

home. Staff are very attuned to young people and are skilled at interpreting their behaviour. For example, they quickly pick up on body language and know the triggers that can lead to young people taking risks. Staff are therefore prepared and take swift action to protect young people and minimise harm. All safeguarding issues and incidents are followed up in therapy and key work sessions. This ensures young people reflect on their behaviour, link actions to consequence and develop safer coping strategies.

The home adopts a strong anti-bullying ethos. Bullying is taken seriously and incidents, no matter how small, are always appropriately challenged. Young people trust staff and know they will protect and advocate for them if they are getting bullied. Not only does this make them feel safe, it demonstrates that they are important and their rights are being upheld.

The manager has forged strong links with partner agencies such as the police, local safeguarding officers and youth offending teams. Successful collaborative working ensures all agencies are working together and optimising resources to keep young people safe.

The Registered Manager ensures safe recruitment procedures are robustly applied in the home. All necessary checks are undertaken and recorded on staff files. Consequently, young people are cared for by an appropriately vetted team, which further promotes their safety within the home.

The home provides a safe and secure environment to vulnerable young people. Effective health and safety procedures are integral to the daily running of the home. Regular fire drills ensure both staff and young people are fully familiar with evacuation procedures. Health and safety checks are routinely undertaken and recommendations are quickly actioned. All of which, ensures the home is a safe place for young people to live.

Leadership and management

good

The home is run by an experienced and suitably qualified Registered Manager. He holds a level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management and has over eleven years' experience of working in children's residential services. He has been in a management role for four years. The service has a deputy manager who oversees the day-to-day running of the home in the manager's absence. Effective arrangements are therefore in place when the manager is not present.

The Registered Manager is an enthusiastic and energetic leader. He employs a sufficient number of dedicated staff which ensures outcomes and quality of care continues to exceed statutory expectations.

The statement of purpose is up-to-date and clearly defines the aims and objectives of

the service; it has been appropriately translated into a young people's guide. All young people receive a copy of this guide upon admission. Consequently, young people, parents and placing authorities have clear expectations from the start of placement.

The manager is committed to providing an excellent standard of care to young people. This is reflected in the home's development plan where it is evident that young people, parents, social workers, and other partners are routinely consulted about the care and quality of the home.

The home is unquestionably well resourced and employs a sufficient number of staff. Staff are suitably qualified and trained and are effectively equipped with the knowledge, skills and expertise to meet young people's needs. A minor shortfall was in the manager's efforts to evaluate the impact some training has on staff's practice, specifically, online training. Furthermore, staff are not being provided with sufficient opportunities to reflect, as a team, on their learning and training. This impacts on the manager's ability to evaluate training and obtain a thorough analysis of the team's needs.

The manager ensures that staff are supported in their roles through appraisal, supervision and structured team meetings. Staff also benefit from having access to the in-house therapy service. This enables staff to further develop their practice, as well improve their own resilience. On occasion, some staff's supervision had been cancelled, which means staff are not benefitting from the formal supervision as frequently as they should.

The Registered Manager has ensured the home has strong links with safeguarding agencies, colleges, leaving care services, placing authorities and health services. This ensures all relevant partners are working collaboratively and effectively to protect young people and meet their needs.

Strong leadership has ensured young people are profiting from individualised, comprehensive risk assessments and placement plans. All statutory documents, such as care and transition plans are up-to-date and readily available. Statutory social work visits, placement planning meetings and reviews are undertaken within set timescales and clearly recorded on young people's files. This ensures young people receive the care and support required as their plans are relevant and current.

The manager has devised thorough monitoring systems to ensure robust auditing and evaluation of the service. For example, progress of the home is tracked through detailed and evaluative monitoring reports which comply with regulation.

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.