

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	1 June 2016
Unique reference number	SC068827
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Hannah Phillips
Inspector	Jennie Christopher

Inspection date	1 June 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Declined in effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Requires improvement
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC068827

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- The use of the police as a behaviour management tool is having a negative impact on young people's relationships with staff. The need for police intervention results in young people feeling that staff are unable to keep them safe.
- The reasons for staff to call the police to the home are not clear. Messages from senior managers and managers within the home are not consistent. The notion of a duty of care to staff is in conflict with the need to not criminalise young people or bring them to the attention of the police.
- Police responses when young people are arrested are usually restorative. However, a restorative approach to behaviour management is not being used consistently by all staff in the home. Initial sanctions are often in multiples and are punitive.

The children's home strengths

- Staff have some very strong relationships with young people, and staff provide an often nurturing approach to care. Young people who have struggled to trust adults in the past are beginning to form positive relationships with staff in the home.
- The registered manager has good oversight of the home and processes within it. She promotes a clear ethos for the home in line with the statement of purpose. Young people are central to planning and joint working is effective.
- Young people have all made progress while living in the home. This includes a reduction in episodes of missing from care, improved attendance and engagement in education and participation in activities.
- Young people are engaged in the development of the home, and their views are listened to and, when possible, the staff implement these. For example, young people have chosen decor for the home and helped to redesign the garden.

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
11: The positive relationships standard The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on: (1)(a)(b)(c) mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour and positive responses to other children and adults. (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(viii)(ix)(x)(xi) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure: that staff meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; strive to gain each child's respect and trust; 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; are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children. This relates to, but is not exclusive to, the use of police as a behaviour management tool and implementation of the home's	30 June 2016

prescribed approach to behaviour management with a restorative approach.	
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Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by a local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to five young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
9 November 2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
8 July 2015	Full	Good
24 October 2014	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
14 May 2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Requires improvement
Young people benefit from individualised care from a staff team which is committed to improving the outcomes for young people. Their relationships are positive and all young people identify staff they can go to if they are anxious or worried, but also those staff they like to spend time with and have a laugh with. Young people who have historically found it difficult to trust adults have begun to allow themselves to be nurtured and have formed some strong bonds with staff. Observations showed young people making jokes and sharing banter with the established staff in the home. There has been an increased use of staff from other homes within the organisation, due to issues within the home, which has raised some young people's anxieties as they do not know those who are caring for them. Young people have access to adults away from the home, such as family support workers and independent visitors, in order to share their views and feel further supported. Young people have the opportunity to influence the running of the home through formal and ad hoc consultation. Changes which have resulted have included redecoration of bedrooms, choice of holiday destinations and staff using a purse rather than envelopes when shopping with young people. Young people's in-house care plans are clear and identify the aims and purpose of their placements. All young people have made progress in relation to their starting points while living in the home. Examples include engaging in education, especially when they have missed years of school, revising for and sitting GCSE exams, reductions of periods of time in being missing from care and engaging in new activities, such as kick boxing. Young people have the opportunity to partake in various activities, both within the home and community, and board games and loom bands have been bought as a result of young people's requests. They also have the opportunity to engage in activities, such as feeding ducks, which they may have missed out on in their early childhood. Young people are supported to have contact with their family and those people who are significant to them, Staff advocate to increase contact when deemed appropriate and ensure that young people can meet up with friends who are deemed appropriate for them to socialise with. Staff liaise effectively with relevant key professionals to improve young people's life chances and well-being. The home has close links with the looked after children nurse, drug and alcohol services, education and emotional well-being professions.	

There are positive links with the local youth offending service and specialist police officers to support those at risk of offending or exploitation. However, the frequency with which police are called to the home in response to incidents of negative behaviour is concerning. This potentially has a detrimental impact on young people's relationships with staff, who they may not feel can keep them safe, or young people may relive early years' experiences of police being called to the family home.

In recent weeks, young people's quality of experience of day-to-day living in the home has been impacted by the volume of incidents, damage to the home and police involvement in managing incidents. Despite not necessarily vocalising their worries, young people are displaying them through their actions and behaviours. One young person has been offered respite at a home within the organisation while more appropriate placements are sought for others.

Transitions into and out of the home, when planned, are mindful of young people's needs and experiences. However there have been occasions where emergency moves have been deemed necessary, both into and out of the home. The impact of this on young people's progress is unknown. In order to prepare young people for independence and adulthood, staff have worked with them to consider what skills they would like to develop. Examples are redeveloping the garden and being involved in the groundwork and planting of the garden, using online shopping for clothes and being involved in menu planning and shopping for the week.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The use of the police as a behaviour management response is having a negative impact on young people's relationships with, and trust in, staff. Reasons for calling the police to the home are not clear or understood by staff, as there is confusion in the messages being delivered by the registered manager and senior managers within the wider organisation. The notion is that the organisation has a duty of care to staff, but current practice is not in line with the duty to not criminalise young people, or to bring them to the police's attention unnecessarily. While police responses are usually restorative, the act of calling the police implies staff cannot manage young people's behaviour, nor implement restorative justice without involving an external agency. Sanctions are imposed in addition to police involvement, and often these are not relevant to the incident, or multiple sanctions are imposed for one event. The	

registered manager, when monitoring records, identifies if sanctions are multiple or are written emotionally rather than with a perspective of the young person's emotional needs at the time. The registered manager and some members of the staff team are mindful of the emotional distress the behaviour is conveying. In several instances, though, behaviour is being interpreted as an attack on the members of staff, who are internalising the event rather than reflecting on what need it may be meeting for the young person. This is not to say that the police should not be called to serious incidents, but there is not currently a consensus of what is a serious incident. There is a culture within some of the staff that not calling the police is a weakness or is not taking the issue seriously.

The lack of clear and consistent boundaries when serious incidents do occur leaves young people confused about what is expected of them. The use of police to restore calm within the home risks young people feeling that staff are unable to keep them safe, whether they are the young person in crisis or are witnessing an incident. However, staff are skilled in de-escalation tactics and this was observed on several occasions during the inspection, especially with one individual who displays high levels of anxiety. Restraint is rarely used, and only after other interventions have been exhausted.

Young people do still go missing from the home on occasion. Responses to young people being missing are well coordinated, including searching for them in known locations and contacting friends and family members. On return from missing, young people are afforded the opportunity to talk to an independent person from a national charity. There had been a significant reduction in incidents of missing by some young people, although others have increased this behaviour in recent weeks. Those who are at risk of sexual exploitation are supported by staff to consider how they can reduce their vulnerability while in the community and online. Good quality assessments and plans identify triggers and known signs that the young person may be being groomed or exploited. Joint working with specialist police officers further safeguards young people, and legal action has been taken when necessary against inappropriate adults in the community. Staff within the home have a good understanding of exploitation, and recognise that all young people in their care are vulnerable to all forms of exploitation, including sexual and financial, and have potential vulnerability to criminal gangs.

Risk assessments within the home are robust. They identify triggers for young people who may self-injure, misuse substances or offend when they are anxious or upset. Close links with the child and adolescent mental health service, looked after children nurse and drug and alcohol team ensure that young people have a swift referral to expert services, although they do not always feel ready for the support. In addition, staff use key work sessions to promote healthy lifestyles.

Staff are confident in their role in safeguarding and protecting young people. Any concerns are reported to the appropriate safeguarding professionals swiftly. Reporting of complaints by young people regarding staff to the local authority

designated officer demonstrates an open culture to safeguarding and child protection. E-safety is promoted within the home, and young people have access to smart phones and other electronic devices. Staff support and role model appropriate use, allowing young people to be able to use social networks safely when they move on.

Safer recruitment is practised within the organisation and a range of checks are completed prior to employment, including checks from employment agencies when temporary staff are used. Young people are further protected from avoidable hazards by regular checks of the building and fire protection equipment. There is extensive damage to the home currently, although this is being rectified quickly and the home remains safe in the intervening period.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager runs the home effectively and promotes the ethos of care in line with the statement of purpose. She has been in post since March 2014 and holds a relevant qualification for the role. In her time managing the home she has supported the staff team to reconsider its approaches to care and promoted the ethos of allowing young people to work through their anger and upset in a safe environment. This has resulted in some staff feeling that they are not supported by the manager, especially when they feel they have been the 'victim' of physical and verbal attacks by young people. The process of challenging the long-standing ethos of some staff's response to behaviour management and sanction setting is ongoing. Both the registered manager and deputy manager were reflective of this challenge during the inspection. The management team and senior staff prioritise the needs of young people in the running of the home. This has caused some conflict but progress is being made. Recently, the use of staff from other homes in the organisation who do not know the young people has raised anxieties in both staff and young people. There have been difficulties in recruiting high calibre staff to the home, and the recruitment process is ongoing. The management team makes good use of independent monitoring in line with Regulation 44, and it has requested greater evaluation of sanctions, restraints and other significant incidents in these reports. Managers' monitoring in line with Regulation 45 is evaluative and helps to inform the development plan, which young people have also contributed to. Regular reviews of young people's progress, no matter how small it is perceived to	

be, allows for smarter planning for their future goals incentives. Staff reinforce these positive steps and progress with young people to help keep them motivated and to celebrate their achievements. Comprehensive reviews of incidents, missing, restraints and sanctions further promote the evaluative approach to planning. However, in recent weeks, due to the changes in dynamics of the group and an increase in incidents, oversight of these areas has not been as robust.

The management team has an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the home and the registered manager is incredibly reflective of the current crisis in the home and how to support the young people and staff. The management team recognises when young people's placements are not progressing as planned and considers how best to support the young person, including potential moves to services that can better meet their needs.

There are strong links with other agencies to promote positive outcomes for young people and key workers remain in regular contact with education and young people's families, as an example. Staff supervision is regular and staff suggest that it is effective. Staff meetings are utilised as learning experiences for staff to reflect on young people's needs and how best to support them, including adapting practice in the home.

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 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 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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