

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	26 May 2016
Unique reference number	SC368637
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Channels and Choices Kent LLP
Registered provider address	45 London Road, Dover, Kent CT17 0SG

Responsible individual	Martin Scholfield
Registered manager	Raymond Ashton
Inspector	Jan Hunnam

Inspection date	26 May 2016
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	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC368637

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people make exceptional progress through the consistent application of a research-led therapeutic approach by staff to their care. Supported by a team of therapists, and led by managers committed to providing a calm, stable and safe environment, staff deliver extremely high quality care and support for young people.
- Young people with complex needs and attachment difficulties flourish as they develop trusting relationships with staff, resulting in significant improvements in their behaviour. They progress in all aspects of their lives.
- Staff understand the emotional needs of each young person. This enables them to provide effective therapeutic support which consistently promotes young people's safety, welfare and development. Young people feel safe knowing that staff listen and respond to them as unique individuals. They are developing the ability to manage their emotions without resorting to violence.
- Care plans and risk assessments are detailed and comprehensive. An ongoing review of strategies ensures that staff effectively promote positive outcomes for young people.
- The registered manager's dedication to providing a therapeutic environment, through thoughtful leadership and successful role modelling, is mirrored by the staff team. This is rewarded by the significant progress that young people are making.
- Monitoring systems are rigorous, driving improvement and maintaining high standards. The independent visitor's reports require a clear judgement about whether young people are effectively safeguarded and whether the conduct of the home promotes their well-being. In all other respects they are comprehensive, contributing well to the quality assurance process.

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
The independent person must produce a report about a visit ('the independent person's report') which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether - (a) children are effectively safeguarded; and (b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44(4))	26 August 2016

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by a private organisation. It offers therapeutic residential care.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
9 February 2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
19 October 2015	Full	Good
14 October 2014	Full	Good
18 August 2014	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Young people living in the home make rapid and exceptional progress. A social worker commented that she was, 'delighted at how well a young person is doing at the home. The young person is making excellent progress and is in a much better place since moving to the home.' She specifically mentioned improvements in behaviour which she attributed to strong, positive relationships with staff and the young person feeling listened to and valued. The behaviour of all young people at the home is improving significantly due to the consistent implementation by the staff team of a therapeutic approach based on research-led attachment theory and practice. As a result, young people's future life chances are considerably improved. Placing authorities are currently considering an imminent move for one young person to live with a parent and an appropriate foster placement is being sought for another young person. Young people enjoy being with staff who respond to them with warmth and good humour. As strong, trusting relationships develop, they become more self-confident and comfortable in talking to staff about their concerns, thoughts and views, knowing that staff will pay attention and respond. They are happy and relaxed living at the home. A young person described the home as 'homely and chilled'. Staff tailor all support to young people's complex, individual needs. Frequent, effective key work sessions focus on specific issues relating to their development and provide young people with opportunities to express their opinions. Daily group meetings are a constructive forum for them to discuss issues affecting everyday living and group dynamics. They are aware of the complaints procedure, though they use it rarely to raise a grievance. On such occasions, the registered manager fully investigates the matter or refers it to the appropriate authority and the young person receives a formal outcome letter. Consequently, young people know that their views are important, and that they are listened to and respected, thus raising their self-esteem and developing an understanding that staff appreciate them as unique individuals. Currently, two of the three young people are attending school and demonstrating very good progress from their starting points. One young person, who prior to living at the home had not attended school for a number of years, is attending regularly and engaging in education. Staff support young people who experience	

difficulties in school effectively. One young person is receiving education at home until a suitable education provision is identified. Managers act as 'good parents', for example they are working with relevant agencies to ensure an appropriate school placement is found to meet the young person's specific needs. Managers work proactively with the virtual school to promote young people's educational experience and outcomes.

Identifying and supporting young people to engage in suitable activities is an integral part of the home's therapeutic approach. According to young people's personal interests, staff offer them opportunities to participate in new experiences and pursuits so that they can develop confidence, social skills and a sense of identity. These activities also help to promote positive relationships with staff and peers. Recent activities include playing for a local rugby team, scootering lessons, scouts, army cadets and a local youth club. Staff encourage young people to participate in age-appropriate pursuits and recognise when they may have missed important play and development opportunities in their past.

Detailed health plans ensure that young people receive health services according to their individual needs. With a strong focus on their emotional and psychological health and well-being, staff work in partnership with the organisation's therapy team who deliver successful individual work with young people, group work and staff support and training. Therapists undertake emotional needs assessments identifying young people's attachment style and recommending particular strategies of support. Alongside this input from therapists, staff refer young people to the child and adolescent mental health service to assess any emerging or underlying mental health issues, thus ensuring that staff and therapists implement effective and appropriate treatment plans to promote their psychological and emotional well-being.

Staff support young people to acquire independence and daily living skills as they prepare for their transition to adult life. They gradually learn how to manage unsupervised social time, develop personal care routines and practical daily living skills. Independence plans and key work sessions introduce young people to the notion of taking responsibility for themselves at a pace and level appropriate to their stages of development. Staff work proactively with young people's families to promote and maintain positive relationships.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding

The aim of the home is to help young people to develop a secure base from which they can achieve their full potential. Staff are succeeding in providing a calm, stable and safe environment where young people are flourishing. Fundamental to this are the trusting relationships that staff have developed with young people, which result in significant improvements in their behaviour and progress in all aspects of their lives. A young person commented that they feel safe, 'because I can talk to people. If I'm upset they sort things out for me.' A social worker remarked that staff talk to a young person before their emotions escalate. The young person, 'feels really listened to' and is now able to manage their anger, when in a previous placement they were displaying high levels of violence.

This successful, therapeutic, nurturing support relies on all staff understanding the specific emotional needs of each of the young people. A social worker noted that, 'staff know the young person very well'. This means that they are able to provide personalised support. Care plans and risk assessments demonstrate that staff fully understand the risks each young person faces. Highly individualised strategies guide staff in providing effective interventions and protection to advance development. Key work sessions play an important part in addressing identified risks and particular needs. These are frequent and are linked to up-to-date key worker action plans ensuring the focus remains on areas for development. Managers monitor records of key work sessions to confirm that young people are receiving the level of support and guidance necessary to meet the targets set in the action plan. As a result, change is embedded and young people develop well and become increasingly safe.

A whole-team approach to applying the therapeutic ethos, through exploring with therapists the meaning of young people's behaviour in the context of their past experiences, enables staff to respond appropriately to their emotional needs and to de-escalate situations effectively. An important aspect of staff development is to extend their self-awareness of how their own responses, attitudes and behaviours affect the behaviour of others, particularly the young people.

As young people develop attachments and trusting relationships with staff, they accept the support that staff offer and the necessity for physical intervention decreases. A young person, recently admitted to the home, required a high level of physical intervention by staff to manage her behaviour safely. From an average of seven restraints a month in the first three months, she is responding to staff support to the extent that for the following two months no physical intervention has been necessary. Managers carefully consider and monitor such incidents to ensure safe practice and to evaluate the strategies in place to support young people.

Incidents involving young people leaving the home without permission are not frequent. Since the last inspection there have been three occasions when staff have reported young people missing. Staff follow agreed procedures and protocols

effectively to safeguard young people and to minimise the risk of harm. Return interviews are completed and inform preventative work undertaken through key work sessions to develop their awareness of the risks they face and how to keep themselves safe.

High staffing levels contribute to safeguarding young people, as does the comprehensive training that staff receive on relevant themes, such as e-safety, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Staff appreciation of the dangers that young people face increases their vigilance in identifying potential risks. Raising young people's awareness of online safety is ongoing. As young people mature, staff provide them with opportunities to use social media and have unsupervised social time but always with careful consideration of risk and reasonable monitoring. A young person reported that she is happy accessing Facebook knowing that staff keep an eye on her use.

Robust recruitment systems are in place to safeguard young people from unsuitable adults working with them. All checks on prospective employees are undertaken before they commence working at the home.

Health and safety checks are up to date. Appropriate fire safety measures are routinely applied.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The registered manager has been in post since July 2014. He is suitably qualified and experienced for the role and is registered with Ofsted. Since his appointment, he has embedded a therapeutic approach to the care of young people and is implementing the aims set out in the statement of purpose. With a calm and thoughtful manner, he supports and mentors staff to listen, hear and respond to young people, reflect on their practice and understand the needs of each young person. There is evidence that the substantial improvements within the home is advancing the outcomes for young people and their future life chances. Supervision and appraisal for staff are integral to improving practice and embedding the ethos of the home. Regular, individual supervision sessions are reflective, comprehensive and centred on young people's needs. Targets are used well to enable staff to develop their practice and further improve the service. The recent inclusion of a discussion relating to safeguarding for each young person ensures that all staff have the opportunity to focus on specific risks and protective	

strategies to keep young people safe.

Team meetings are intrinsically child-focused. Monthly meetings devote a half day to 'therapeutic thinking time' led by qualified therapists. These sessions provide an excellent forum for developing the knowledge and understanding of staff in relation to the psychological and emotional needs of each young person. This is considered in the context of a therapeutic model based on research-led application of attachment practice. All staff receive appropriate training to understand and apply this model, with ongoing staff development. Therapists help staff to analyse young people's behaviour and devise strategies specific to their attachment styles. Young people benefit from this exploration of their behaviour and emotions, which results in practical strategies which staff implement in a meaningful and thoughtful way.

Comprehensive induction and training programmes allow staff to perform their roles confidently and competently. Staff who have completed their probation period are qualified to the required level or are working towards the qualification within the required timescale.

Systematic monitoring of the home at various levels ensures that young people continue to experience high standards of care. Managers are committed to maintaining high standards, addressing weaknesses and improving outcomes for young people. This is demonstrated by effective day-to-day monitoring of records and incidents, monthly monitoring of all aspects of the home with specific action points, and very detailed and evaluative quarterly reports. Senior managers within the organisation complete monthly quality assurance visits. External monitoring reports with recommendations for improvement contribute to a comprehensive overview of the service. However, these reports do not clearly express the independent person's views on the effectiveness of safeguarding, or how well staff promote the young people's well-being.

Social workers are positive about their relationships with the home. They acknowledge and appreciate the genuine efforts of staff to work together and agree strategies to promote young people's well-being and progression. The home establishes constructive relationships with all professionals involved with young people. A social worker commented that staff work very well with a young person's youth offending service worker. These constructive relationships allow managers to challenge plans and proposals where they consider them not to be in the young person's best interests. This is illustrated by a firm resolution to find a school placement to suit a young person's needs. Parents also report positively on the quality of care provided by the home and consider that they are kept well informed.

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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