

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC371723
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Educare Adolescent Services Limited
Registered person address	Venture House 12 Prospect Business Park, Longford Road CANNOCK Staffordshire WS11 0LG
Responsible individual	Mark Dyson
Registered manager	Clifton Johnson
Date of last inspection	20/01/2014

Inspection date	28/05/2014
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Previous inspection	inadequate progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	None.

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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The home provides an adequate quality care through the recently Registered Manager and new staff team. All staff demonstrate commitment, empathy and understanding of the plans for each of the two young people in placement. This promotes improved outcomes for young people despite the absence of regular input from the organisation's psychology clinician assistants. Young people have mostly positive views about the quality of their care in the home and their relationships with staff.

Young people are safe and feel safe, despite their difficult presenting behaviours and some serious incidents. This is because staffing levels are responsive and managers communicate appropriately with partner agencies.

Leaders and managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home and are developing the staff team adequately. However, they are taking too long to understand and utilise the home's policies and procedures and electronic recording system to best effect. As a result, records and information do not evidence practice robustly and do not provide clear, useable information for effective monitoring of the home. These shortfalls hold back the quality of care and the quality of leadership and management. Nevertheless, they are not currently impacting negatively on the welfare and safety of young people.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned and the organisation operates other children's homes in the area.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/01/2014	Interim	inadequate progress
22/05/2013	Full	good
21/01/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
17/09/2012	Full	adequate

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
34 (2001)	ensure that the system for improving the quality of care is effective, and that it includes consultation with children, parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34 (1) and (3))	28/06/2014
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. This pertains specifically to training in record keeping systems and standards (Regulation 27 (4))	28/06/2014
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25 (1))	28/06/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that young people have access to a range of educational resources to support their learning and have opportunities to engage in activities which promote learning (NMS 8.2)
- ensure that young people's health is promoted in accordance with their placement plan. This is specifically in respect of access to the organisation's therapeutic services (NMS 6.5)
- ensure that staff understand the nature of records maintained and follow the home's policy for the keeping and retention of files. Ensure there is a system place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed (NMS 22.1)
- ensure that information about the young person is recorded clearly and in a way which is helpful to them. Encourage young people to read their files, correct errors and add personal statements. (NMS 22.5)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Young people have made adequate progress to develop a positive self view and emotional resilience. They are better able to manage their emotions and are making some positive relationships. For example, young people are making confident, mature communications of their wishes to staff and are better able to comply with the expectations of group living. This is because they feel valued and listened to by the new manager and staff in the home, despite the fact that there is a current lack of input to them over many weeks from the organisation's therapist.

Young people are also benefitting from a healthier lifestyle. They have the necessary prescribed medication and medical attention wherever necessary. They are discouraged from smoking and are given good support to maintain better daily routines and sleep patterns. Whilst they are often still up most of the night, young people are engaging in activities with staff during school holidays and on some evenings are going to bed and to sleep without issue. Young people are given good encouragement to help make healthy meals, to eat together and to have a positive body image. This is because staff are attentive and sensitive role models in this regard. Some young people have recently signed up to an agreement to quit smoking and are also making good use of a punch bag to practise their boxing and release frustrations in a physical, but safe way.

Some young people are attending school and making progress again in education after some issues during recent months. Other young people have not accessed formal education for a long time prior to this placement. Safeguarding issues have been prioritised over education at the early stages of placement. Some young people are growing vegetables in the garden and have chosen new furnishings when they moved to a different bedroom of their choice. However, one young person, who enjoys writing songs and poetry and is a good communicator, is not accessing any books, papers, magazines, games or other resources to develop learning. Overall, young people have insufficient access to educational resources or activities which promote their learning in the home alongside staff.

Quality of care **adequate**

Young people enjoy sound relationships with the new staff group. They interact positively with staff and peers because staff are calm, patient and empathic towards them. Staff set clear, consistent and appropriate boundaries for young people and are responsive and appropriate in all their responses to young people, including exhibitions of anti-social behaviour. As a result, anti-social behaviour is well managed and young people are learning to trust and respect the adults caring for them.

The views, wishes and feelings of young people are taken into account in the running of the home so that young people feel listened to. For example, a young person complained about the changes to management, the high staff turnover, and the lack of peers in the home. He was interviewed and written to in regard to this. He is pleased that the new manager is committed to staying in the job and has involved him in the interview process for new staff. He also feels that the home listened to his request to save rewards towards a new motorbike and are facilitating the purchase of the bike. Equally, he is pleased that his wish to have a new peer placement made was met when the new manager and staff team felt adequately prepared to take an appropriate admission.

Staff work adequately with social workers, teachers, health professionals and police to promote positive outcomes for young people. They know the outline of young people's care plans and deal with medication and health needs adequately. They ensure that the home environment is clean, well maintained and homely for young people. However, staff feel somewhat isolated in the rural location of the home and say they receive insufficient services, such as the organisations' therapy support. A member of staff said, 'We could do with more resources to offer the young people - we often have to buy it in or travel to access services.'

Staff share information adequately at shift handovers and try to make time to reflect together about care practice issues. However, staff are not yet confident about recording systems and cannot always document or access necessary information to support the most consistent care or maximise young people's engagement with their records and plans. For example, staff were unaware of a young person's restricted contact arrangements and allowed a phone call to take place which resulted in a serious incident due to the young person's ensuing distress.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people report that they generally feel safe in the home and outside it. They are pleasantly surprised that the concerning comments they made on the Ofsted surveys were followed up. They confirmed that their comments about wanting to get out of the home were made in jest. Young people do find the location of the home very quiet and rural, but understand that their care plan includes strategies to disrupt links which are inappropriate and/or unsafe. Staff say, 'we are in a location that is safe and offers protection to the children. We are trying to effect change in the lives of young people and our rural setting helps us to achieve some degree of success.' However, systems of recording safeguarding activity are less robust than the practice itself. For example, the manager cannot locate the record of a recent room search, although all concerned are confident that it was conducted according to the home's policy. Similarly, impact risk assessments for taking new placements do not back up the current stated evaluation of risk which leads managers to recommend no further placements at this time. These shortfalls have not compromised safe care practices

or young people's current safety, but they hold back young people's involvement and engagement in reflecting on incidents through their records.

Young people benefit from positive and proactive behaviour management strategies which are consistently applied. Staff recognise young people's particular vulnerabilities and address them empathically. They reward good behaviour and self-control with warmth, praise and activities which young people choose themselves. Staff encourage young people to be active during the day and do not deploy punitive measures of control when young people are disruptive at night. Damage is rectified without unnecessary sanctions and restraint has not been used by the current staff group or manager. Instead, staff talk with young people calmly and rationally about how they can minimise repeat incidents. As a result of improved and positive relationships, young people have not had any incidents of assault in the home since February 2014.

Staff encourage young people to take some reasonable risks and they agree strategies and responses which limit risks. For example, young people who have a history of going missing and who are vulnerable to exploitation when missing are taken by car to a venue in the local community and are able to socialise there with staff and other young people. This is because the arrangements are carefully considered beforehand and young people are involved in frankly discussing the risks and making agreements. As a result, the activity is successful and young people do not run away. Similarly, higher staffing levels and waking night staff are deployed currently in addition to the bedroom door alarms. This is in response to a serious incident of damage and young people being together when they should not have been. As a result, young people are more closely supervised and given positive attention regardless of the time. Serious damage and unsafe activity has not occurred since, although some disruptive behaviour continues to occur.

Staff are aware of the different factors that may trigger young people going missing. They have responded to the issues through working with police, school and another care home. Young people have developed a better understanding of the importance of communicating with staff and keeping to agreed arrangements for collection after free time in the community. As a result, incidents of young people being missing from the home are minimised.

Leadership and management

inadequate

The new manager in post was registered in April 2014 and is now supported by a different area manager in the organisation. Together, these leaders are supporting a new staff group in the home. They are ambitious for young people to achieve good outcomes and model a commitment to meeting their needs. However, managers are still far from embedding good systems of recording and monitoring in the home. For example, there is no system to prompt staff regular checking and logging of the operation of the bedroom door alarms. As a result, staff and managers were recently

unaware the alarms were partially disabled, allowing an incident where young people were in the same bedroom without staff knowing. This has compromised the safety of young people. The manager has not reviewed and familiarised himself with all the systems and records needed in the home. Training in the organisation's computer system has also not been forthcoming. As a result, neither staff nor managers are documenting or reviewing care practice to best effect.

It is too early to see embedded improvements since the last inspection of the home when progress was inadequate and there was no manager registered. For example, all staff, including the manager, are still in their probationary periods and are therefore leading shifts when they do not have significant experience of the home. Similarly, staff and managers meet relatively regularly, but do not benefit from the regular input of the organisation's clinicians at present. Nevertheless, staff and managers exhibit reflective and positive care practises and communicate adequately, both internally and with placing authorities. They feel the induction provided by the organisation was good and that they have received sufficient training to be able to provide safe care. However, staff morale is being adversely affected by frequent night time disruption by young people at present and they require improved support and opportunity to reflect and plan, from leaders and managers.

The Registered Manager is undertaking monitoring work and is making notifications to Ofsted when significant incidents occur. He also makes adequate communications with other agencies, including police, health and placing authorities when incidents occur. However, the messages resulting from monitoring are few and do little to inform the manager about where shortfalls are and how to improve the service. This is because there is too little reflection and analysis of what the home has actually been doing and of young people's behaviours, to enable shortfalls to be identified. It is also because the views of young people, parents and stakeholders are not regularly sought as part of monitoring work.

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.