

Children's home inspection – Full

Inspection date	06/12/2016
Unique reference number	SC397112
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Alliance Care and Education Limited
Registered provider address	Brow Top Farm, Quernmore, Lancaster LA2 0QW

Responsible individual	Andrew Taylor
Registered manager	James Dawson
Inspector	Marina Tully

Inspection date	06/12/2016
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

SC397112

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people make continued progress in all areas of their development, which is down to staff's diligent support and nurturing care.
- Young people benefit from developing secure relationships with staff. As a result, they trust staff and therefore willingly accept staff's effective guidance and support.
- The manager and staff value young people's wishes and feelings. Their committed approach to participation ensures that young people are meaningfully involved in decision-making.
- Staff's high aspirations are maximising young people's learning and training opportunities. Young people benefit from full-time education and training placements, as well as voluntary work and a range of hobbies and activities.
- Excellent partnership working with specialist health services, including children and adolescent mental health (CAMHS), is improving young people's emotional health, behaviour and resilience.
- Young people are safe. A dedicated team that receives bespoke training on matters such as child sexual exploitation, drugs and self-harm is enhancing their welfare and safety.
- Young people and staff are wholly supported by a proactive, strong and dedicated registered manager. He leads by example and ensures that the team is stable, supported and competently trained. He demonstrates eagerness and a capacity for the continued development of the service.
- Areas for improvement are largely in relation to administrative shortfalls, such as the home records, the local area assessment and staff recruitment.

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, the 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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
Ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. With particular regard to references. (Regulation 32(3)(d))	30/01/2017
Ensure to maintain records ('case records') for each child which are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 32(1)(c))	30/01/2017
Ensure to review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). (Regulation 46(1))	30/01/2017

Recommendations

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

- Ensure to record the administration of all medication, which includes occasions when prescribed medication is refused. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- Ensure that records of restraints enable the registered person and staff to review the use of restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concerns emerge. Records should clearly detail the name of the person who used the measure. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides care and accommodation for four young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
06/10/2015	Full	Good
09/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/08/2014	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgement

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people make measurable progress from their starting points and they benefit from nurturing care and support. Young people's individual needs are fully understood by a competent and hard-working team. Furthermore, consistent partnership working with young people, social workers, therapists and family members is ensuring that young people's needs are effectively addressed. This is reflected in a social worker's comments: '(Young person's name) has made tremendous progress. She was placing herself at risk when she moved into the home, but this has now reduced considerably.' Staff have successfully fostered secure, trusting relationships with all young people living in the home. This is demonstrated in a young person's comment: 'Staff have pushed me to get where I want to be. It has not been easy all of the time, but I am learning how to recognise when I am down and I talk to staff.' These trusting relationships are providing young people with a sense of stability and helping them to thrive. All young people living in the home have full-time education or training provision in place. Good routines and consistent encouragement are helping to improve young people's school attendance. Young people have aspirations and ambitions, for example, they have plans to go to university, to work with disabled children, and one young person is doing a plumbing course at college. Staff's consistent support is enabling young people to reach their full potential and pursue their chosen careers. Suitably trained and experienced staff understand and address young people's health needs effectively. Emotional health is promoted exceptionally well in this home, which is down to effective joint working with the in-house therapist and child and adolescent mental health services. Because of staff's consistent support and commitment, young people benefit from improved emotional health and are safer. Improvements can be made in the home's placement plans to ensure that they provide sufficient detail of young people's health needs and are consistently signed and dated by all staff. Not only will this ensure that all staff have in-depth knowledge of young people's specific needs, but it will also enhance continuity in care. Young people benefit from improved physical health. Staff encourage and support them to eat healthily, exercise and attend their routine health checks with the dentist and optician. When young people are afraid of the dentist staff help them to attend through constant reassurance and when necessary they remain by their	

side throughout the treatment. Additionally, young people are learning to take responsibility for their own medical needs, as staff enable them to take their medication safely. Medication is safely stored and regularly audited in the home. However, staff have not always recorded when a young person has refused their medication. It is not therefore always clear from the medication records if the young person has taken their medication as prescribed. This is a recording issue that to date has not affected young people's welfare or safety but that has the potential to do so.

Staff fully appreciate the importance of young people keeping in touch with their family and friends and play an active role in arranging and facilitating family contact. Young people have increased their contact with their parents and relatives since moving into the home and this is down to staff's diligent support and advocacy. A young person who lives a distance from his family said, 'I now see my sisters and they have come here. Staff have helped me to set this up. I am now able to go and stay with my aunty for Christmas because staff helped me to sort this out.'

Young people have a strong voice in the home. On a day-to-day basis, young people are routinely involved in planning their meals and activities, and decorating their home. Furthermore, they are fully supported to take part in the reviewing of their care plans, and their wishes and feelings are clearly advocated by the team. This meaningful engagement with young people is helping them to feel valued, listened to and respected.

Staff are dedicated to their role of preparing young people for independent living, which ensures that young people's transition to adulthood and independence is successful. As well as supporting practical tasks such as shopping, cleaning and cooking, staff undertake direct work with young people to emotionally prepare them for moving on. Since the last inspection, a young person has successfully moved on to live independently and another has moved to a children's home that is closer to his family.

Young people benefit from taking part in a wide range of activities, such as trips to the cinema and joining local football clubs, as well as spending invaluable time with staff. One young person has recently been awarded a certificate for their voluntary work with a local drugs project. Effective engagement with staff and the local community is enhancing young people's confidence, self-esteem and emotional resilience.

Staff have undoubtedly created a stable, welcoming, homely environment where young people feel safe and extremely well cared for.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Detailed risk assessments and a well-trained, competent team safeguard young people effectively. All staff have undertaken safeguarding training and have attended additional courses on self-harm, drug awareness and child sexual exploitation. Furthermore, independent safeguarding services, such as Catch 22, attend team meetings to provide staff with up-to-date information and research on young people going missing from home or care and child sexual exploitation. As a result, risk-taking behaviour is clearly reducing for young people when they move into the home. Incidents of young people going missing from care are significantly decreasing. When young people do go missing from the home, staff act swiftly and rigorously follow agreed protocols. This was confirmed in a police officer's comments: 'Staff have an excellent understanding of the missing-from-home protocol and understand about agency working. The staff always endeavour to make themselves available to go and collect the missing young people whatever the time of day or night.' Additionally, the manager ensures that independent return interviews are consistently undertaken. This provides young people with the opportunity to discuss the reasons behind their behaviour, which helps to prevent reoccurrence. Staff are alert to the risks presented to young people through the internet and mobile technology. They tackle this realistically, acknowledging the benefits of the internet while informing young people on how to use it more safely. In particular, mobile phone agreements are drawn up with young people that outline staff's expectations, potential risks and consequences should they breach the agreement. This empowers young people to use technology safely. Partnership working is a key strength of this home. Excellent links have been established with many safeguarding agencies, for example, the local community police officer, specialist sexual exploitation services and local drug awareness projects. This proactive approach to partnership working is helping young people to develop positive and trusting relationships with safeguarding professionals who teach them how to stay safe. Staff encourage positive behaviour through clear and consistent boundaries, alongside praise and incentives. Furthermore, staff constantly commend young people's good behaviour and progress. This, coupled with regular key-work sessions, is most definitely helping young people to manage difficult emotions and improve their behaviour. Consequently, the need for staff to physically restrain	

young people, as a protective measure, significantly reduces as young people settle into the home. However, some physical intervention records did not clearly identify the staff involved in the restraint, which hinders the manager's, or others', capacity to evaluate the incident thoroughly.

The registered manager has assessed the local area and, with the support of other safeguarding professionals, such as the police, has identified ways of reducing risk within the community. This can be developed further by ensuring that it is regularly updated to include all potential hazards. For example, the home is in close proximity to a busy motorway, and the potential risks to young people have not been sufficiently addressed.

Staff recruitment practice is not completely robust as there are shortfalls in some staff's pre-employment checks. The shortfalls found included a missing written reference from a previous employer and not verifying all references prior to staff taking up their post.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
A suitably qualified and experienced registered manager leads the service. He is wholly supported by a newly appointed experienced deputy manager. Both the registered manager and the deputy are extremely caring and fully committed to helping young people to progress and achieve. This is reflected in a young person's comments: 'I have found my personality since I moved here and they have helped me to do that... Hats off to Westways and Jimbo (James, the registered manager).' The home is well resourced with a sufficient number of experienced staff to meet each young person's needs. The manager makes good use of team meetings and invites guest speakers, including child sexual exploitation and drug workers, to deliver additional training and support to staff. This ensures that staff have up-to-date knowledge on current research and practice. In addition to this, staff benefit from regular supervision where they are encouraged to reflect on their practice and raise any concerns. As a result, all staff feel supported and valued, and this is reflected in the quality of care provided to young people and their ongoing progress. The registered manager has established strong links with the police, safeguarding agencies, schools and health services. This ensures that all relevant partners are working together to promote and protect young people's welfare. Both staff and other professionals consistently commend the registered manager's support and	

leadership skills.

The home's statement of purpose is up to date and comprehensive and clearly defines the home's aims and objectives. This information is appropriately replicated in the young people's guide, which is provided to all young people when they move into the home. Consequently, young people, parents and social workers have clear expectations of the service from the very start.

Internal and external quality assurance systems are further improving young people's progress and safety, as well as sustaining a high standard of care within the home. Young people's care and progress are tracked through detailed monthly monitoring by an independent visitor. In addition to this, the manager proactively seeks the views of young people and other stakeholders, which informs his own regular service monitoring and development plans.

The registered manager has a clear understanding of the home's strengths, which include a dedicated team, effective team working, consistent nurturing care and strong partnership working. He demonstrates a good understanding of all young people's needs and ensures that they receive effective support from a range of services. Both the registered manager and the deputy are reflective leaders and show enthusiasm and capacity to continually develop the service. They have high aspirations for both the home and the young people. A development plan is in place to improve the service further, in particular the home's records and the local area assessment.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors 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, 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 ensure that their welfare is 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 that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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 that 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 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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
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