

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	19/01/2016
Unique reference number	SC405713
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Sorrelle Fern
Inspector	David Morgan

Inspection date	19/01/2016
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 exceeds 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

SC405713

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people make exceptional progress from their starting points.
- The service is strongly rooted in best practice in all areas.
- There is energetic and ambitious leadership of the staff team and team members are of a high calibre.
- Young people benefit from outstanding partnership working between the staff and other professionals.
- The quality assurance processes have breadth, depth, and they make a noticeable difference.
- The manager seeks new ideas and implements them to make her service as efficient and effective as possible.
- The manager uses research to inform her practice.
- This inspection makes no requirements or recommendations.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is for up to three children or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is located in an urban environment and is operated by a large national company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/01/2015	CH - Interim	Sustained effectiveness
30/06/2014	CH - Full	Good
04/02/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	outstanding
Young people invariably arrive at the home with a range of complex emotional and behavioural needs arising from disjointed background circumstances. As a result, they are in need of a wide variety of services to help them recover. The outcome for the vast majority is they each receive excellent packages of care that help them make remarkable progress. Young people reach a point where they are no longer disaffected or excluded but rather engage in meaningful and legitimate lifestyles. A wide variety of professionals, parents and all the young people readily confirm that the service is outstanding. They use words such as 'fantastic' and 'brilliant' extensively and without exception. One young person said, 'It's great here; I can't big it up enough.' Critically, staff quickly establish accepting and empathetic relationships with new residents. Young people improve markedly because of this commitment. They know that staff consider their concerns and needs carefully and their placement plans are adapted accordingly. One social worker was particularly impressed with the short amount of time staff took to thoroughly understand his young person's 'erratic' behaviours and complex needs. He considers the team to be one of the best he has worked with. A reviewing officer commented that 'the best thing is the relationship between my young person and the staff, even after only one month'. A young person reflected the views of all the young people who have lived at the home since the last inspection when he said, 'I like the staff, there is nothing they could do to help me better.' Another said, 'They're here to help. They spend extra time doing things for us.' A key area of exceptionally good practice is the relationships that arise between staff and parents. A parent said, 'The staff have been very supportive, they couldn't have done any more.' A social worker said that 'staff are excellent in this area; absolutely brilliant. They get parent's views, involve them in activities, and advise them. They are honest and parents don't react badly to them'. A recent example of this work included educating a parent about illicit drugs. As a result, the young person benefitted from consistent care, significantly reduced his drug misuse, and has a realistic opportunity to return home. New young people are welcomed into a property that is located well for easy access to city amenities. It is a multi-cultural area and the needs of each young person arising from their backgrounds are met well. The backgrounds of the team members reflect the diverse community and their efforts to both address young	

people's individual needs and expose them to positive images of social diversity are highly effective. Young people learn to respect other people and believe they are entitled to the same treatment. Staff members demonstrate an excellent understanding of each young person's therapeutic needs, arising, for example, from their religious backgrounds or sexuality.

The building itself is a modern house with contemporary fittings and comfortable furnishing. Each young person has ample private space and there are sufficient communal areas for separate activities, if required. The manager carefully considers the needs of each young person so they match as well as possible to the existing group. This contributes substantially to the low number of negative incidents between young people. There is also a relatively low level of turnover of young people so the personalised style of care has time to be effective.

Professionals such as the police officers and drugs workers comment on how proactive the team is on young people's behalf. Staff members ask for the views of other professionals, based on the latest research, for example into illicit drugs. They demonstrate a particularly high level of communication with other agencies, which serves to coordinate the care of young people exceptionally well. They show initiative and are assertive. This leads to the team of professionals dealing with each young person being up-to-date. A social worker described them as his 'eyes and ears'. A mental health worker, who noted the 'fantastic progress' of her young person, said it meant they complemented her therapeutic work unusually well. Consequently, young people move from being, in the words of one professional, 'all over the place' to regulating themselves. One young person, for example, was showing aggression towards others on a daily basis and now shows very little at all.

Another highlight of the service is the excellent consistency of practice amongst staff themselves. Vigorous coordination of the team means that young people experience integrated responses to their needs and wishes. One professional said, 'All the staff know what's going on; they all keep me up-to-date. It's outstanding!' In difficult situations, this means young people cannot find a gap to exploit and they learn to trust the adults around them. The perseverance and focus of staff leads to young people communicating more completely. As a result, they reduce their risk-taking behaviours and benefit from the wide-ranging social, recreational, and other opportunities on offer. Young people engage with their education placements particularly well even though their progress is often uneven. Staff set aspirational standards, which lead young people to achieve more than expected and to set themselves career objectives. Some young people have progressed through several increasingly academic settings until they have reached a mainstream one. They pass examinations and, where necessary, resit them to get better grades. This has improved their self-confidence so they can compete with

their peers in the job market, and make and sustain lasting friendships.

As in all areas of practice, there is great depth to the quality of work undertaken with young people who are preparing to leave. This process is now being shared with other homes in the company. Staff plan the training of each young person in a series of stages, with opportunities to repeat or accelerate the process depending on the individual. This method of engaging young people is of a high quality. It serves to ensure that young people learn the lessons and are confident in their skills. As a result, some young people changed from needing one-to-one support to travelling long distances independently. Those young people who have left since the last inspection have moved successfully to greater independence, including those who live a long distance away. Some young people remain in contact with the staff and confirm the ongoing success of their moves.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
As in other areas of the care provided to young people, there is great rigour undertaken to keep them safe. The fact that the service also benefits from the latest ideas emerging from a wide range of professional fields, means it is outstanding. The manager in particular stays up-to-date with new initiatives, for example by attending additional meetings with colleagues in the police force and other community leaders. Similarly, staff members undertake higher-level studies that bring new ideas into the home. Young people do not necessarily make smooth progress in the home but the team is adept at adjusting accordingly. Such changes in approach benefit substantially from extensive and thorough consultation with other agencies. The team do not work in isolation. A social worker said, 'Young people are safe in the home and I have every confidence that if this was ever compromised staff would respond appropriately.' Specific community police officers visit regularly and say that 'it's good here – they ask us to call in or we just visit.' Young people feel comfortable with professionals from a range of agencies. As a result, they receive prompt advice about the consequences of their decisions. Because of the system of behaviour management, young people gain a thorough understanding of their own needs and feelings. One said, 'The staff have dealt with a lot of my issues, like my bad temper. They make you learn.' Staff follow up every	

incident in detail so that young people reflect on the issues and devise new strategies. Staff deal with difficult incidents in a measured and calm way so that confrontations are avoided. Consequently, young people learn to take personal responsibility for their actions and improvements are evident in the amount of self-harming behaviours, social skills, and engagement with those in authority. These changes have directly led to greater opportunities in education and reductions in the amount of support they need. An external professional said, 'A highlight is that staff work together well as a team – they address the objectives.'

Young people help staff to assess the levels of risk that prevail. High-level risks currently include young people going missing, sexual exploitation, and the associated physical and emotional health problems. Staff assess and record such risks clearly. The support given to each young person is adjusted accordingly, often with advice from the in-house psychologists. Young people write reflective journals to help them understand issues, which is an excellent practice. Also, the staff complete detailed worksheets with young people to help them further. Effective work was recently completed on bullying, which occurs at a very low level. Every young person receives substantial information about the risks they face or pose. When necessary they receive personal support from experts, for example, regarding sexual health. Young people learn to accept advice and to value their own welfare. In many cases, dangerous and anti-social behaviours have ceased entirely.

In the event that a young person goes missing, excellent attention is given to finding him. Other agencies confirm that staff go 'over and above' to coordinate the search and visit every known. Posters and other resources are distributed in order to get information. As a result, young people learn that they are valued and the risks they face are minimised. The unique method of recording this process is fundamental to the success of this procedure and is therefore being disseminated to other homes. Lessons are gleaned from the return home interviews undertaken by independent people and help prevent recurrences and improve the system.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
The manager was first registered with Ofsted in 2012 and is suitably qualified. She has overseen a steady improvement in the service because of her knowledge and enthusiasm. Great energy is committed to engaging with young people and the top	

priority is getting them on track. This genuine commitment to make a difference is clear to the young people and the practical results are clear to see. The high calibre of her team reflects these attributes. The manager protects and supports her team, which contributes to there being minimal turnover. This is a substantial benefit to young people.

The exceptional level of success achieved by the service is partly due to outstanding networking and partnership working, as described above. This has a direct benefit to young people because they receive expert help quickly. For example, regarding their sexuality and about autism. It also helps improve the service and raise the awareness of staff. For example, regarding issues that are occurring in the community, about approaches to anti-radicalisation, and countering child sexual exploitation. In addition, there is a particularly robust system of quality assurance. Staff continually check to see if other people feel they are on the right lines, whether it is parents, young people, or other professionals. The records of young people's meetings, for example, clearly show what has been done about the issues young people raise. As a result, those individuals know their views matter and are a contribution to young people's progress. If such processes do not working efficiently, the manager changes them. This happened again recently with the process of consultation with parents. Consequently, the high pace of improvement and progress is sustained.

A wide variety of monitoring processes are also completed regularly, which provide further opportunities for self-evaluation. In particular, the manager seeks to ensure her team work consistently. Because of success in this area, the service responds decisively and effectively to challenges. The progress that young people make in addressing their placement plan targets is also closely monitored. This is partly demonstrated in pictorial formats, including charts and graphs, which are a powerful tool during discussions about young people's care.

The manager benchmarks her home against others through her role as the senior home manager in the region. In this job, she supports the regional manager and both gives advice to other managers and receives ideas to use in her own home. At the last inspection one requirement and three recommendations were raised, which have all been addressed. As a result, liaison with local authority safeguarding personnel has improved. This has increased the level of protection provided to young people. Young people also benefit through the collection of photographs and other memorabilia, which they take when they leave. The organisation has had difficulties getting staff through their qualifications in a timely way. Appropriate steps have been taken to improve this and avoid further delays. In this way, young people are assured of receiving a consistent quality of care.

The written development plan for the service includes issues arising from the year

before. This is excellent practice and further evidence of rigorous leadership. It has contributed to the fact that this inspection raises no requirements or recommendations. One change arising because of this process is the substantial improvement in how the service educates young people about equality and diversity. This is now addressed with them in a way they find acceptable and engaging, including topical discussions, displays on the wall and attending local festivals. As a result, young people learn more and are better prepared for their next move. The progress made by young people and the processes that are used indicate that the service has the capacity for further improvement.

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 looked after children 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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