

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	09/07/2015
Unique reference number	SC407929
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Our Place (2008) Ltd
Responsible individual	David French
Registered manager	Lena Greatwich
Inspector	Christy Wannop

Inspection date	09/07/2015
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	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	Requires improvement

SC407929

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Aspects of safeguarding practice and the role of the registered person in concluding allegations is not good enough.
- The leadership and management of the home do not effectively embed learning arising from serious incidents, in formal systems for staff performance and supervision or for quality review of the service. This also relates to scrutiny of behaviour management.
- There is ineffective environmental health and safety, including fire safety and reducing hazards in the grounds.
- The service has not managed to obtain a copy of the placing authority care plan for all young people.
- Agreements about responsibility decision making and delegated authority are not always documented.
- Significant issues in young people's lives, such as concerns about their care, are not always well reflected in their records.
- The registered person does not complete all elements of safe recruitment procedures.
- Information about staff qualifications is not routinely held.
- The Statement of Purpose lacks information about the way therapists work at the home.

The children's home strengths

- The staff's proactive approach to constructive, enjoyable leisure enriches young people with learning disabilities' experiences and enhances their participation within local communities.
- A creative approach to communication means that children's opportunities to have their say and express themselves are maximised, so they learn to participate in respectful, affectionate relationships with staff.
- Excellent large play equipment provides terrific opportunities for young people to let off steam, play healthily and learn outdoor skills like gardening, picking fresh fruit and DIY.
- The service is well resourced. A team of consultant therapists is available to provide prompt assessments and advise staff to maximise young people's progress.
- Excellent staffing levels enable the energetic staff team to fully focus on young people. Staff are active and engaged with young people, concentrating on what they need and want to keep busy and content.
- Placing authorities, associated social care professionals and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the experience of young people and the quality of care.

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
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered person must ensure— (2) (D) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. This is with reference to ensuring that children cannot enter high risk areas within the grounds and safely assessing risks from environmental hazards.	31/08/2015
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference to concluding allegations and concerns about the quality of care, the registered person must inspire and lead a culture in relation to the children's home that- (1)(a) promotes their welfare, and- (2)(g) demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on- (ii) feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	31/08/2015
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— (a) Include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. Specifically, copy of any plan for the care of the child prepared by the child's placing authority, and of The placement plan. (Regulation 36 (1) Schedule 3(19))	31/08/2015

The registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order (Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(a)) and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2) (b))	31/08/2015
The registered person may only— (a) employ an individual to work at the children's home if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). (3) The requirements are that—(d) full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of documentary evidence of any qualifications which the person considers relevant for the position.(Regulation 32, Schedule 2 (5))	31/08/2015
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the Statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule This is in relation to details of any healthcare or therapy provided, including— (a) Details of the qualifications and professional supervision of the staff involved in providing any healthcare or therapy; and (b) Information about how the effectiveness of any healthcare or therapy provided is measured, the evidence demonstrating its effectiveness and details of how the information or the evidence can be accessed. (Schedule 1, Regulation 16(14))	31/08/2015

Recommendations

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

- Ensure staff know, for every child in their care, what level of decision making has been delegated to them in relation to the child's education. These delegations should be recorded in the child's placement plan and it is the joint responsibility of the registered person and the placing authority to agree this at the time of placement. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, Page 27, paragraph 5.9)
- Ensure a safe and stimulating environment in high-quality buildings, with spaces that support nurture and allow privacy as well as common spaces and spaces to be active. This relates to ensuring that all bathrooms promote privacy, with safe door locks. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 6, paragraph 1.10)
- Ensure that the behaviour management strategy is understood and applied

at all times by staff, and kept under review and revised where appropriate. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 46, paragraph 9.34)

- Ensure that supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. Poor performance should be addressed by a timely plan to bring about improvement. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61, Paragraphs 13.1 & 13.5)
- Actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice, particularly following safeguarding concerns. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- Ensure the home's records on each child contribute to their life history. For example, ensure that case records and monthly summaries to parents and placing authorities contain information about serious life events whilst living at the home. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 62, 14.5)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a small private company and is registered to provide care for eight young people with learning disabilities. Young people may stay until they reach 19. The registered person operates a small school for eight young people in a separate building in the grounds.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/02/2015	CH - Interim	Improved effectiveness
02/10/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
07/01/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	requires improvement
Young people do well in short or long term placements and in shared care with their families. Despite efforts, not all young people have a current local authority care and placement plan. This means that the staff cannot always be clear about the formal agreements for decision-making about key issues or aims. Despite this, in-house care planning is child centred, actively involves young people and plans are shared with social workers and parents. A placing social worker commented positively about the strength of staff's response to young people's diverse needs: 'They gauge care to the individual, for instance, my young person is encouraged to engage with his culture and religion, with his room reflecting his interests and identity.' Staff are very successful in helping young people to achieve dignity, self-respect, improve mobility, and become toilet trained, even in adolescence. Those who have had extremely restricted diets, successfully learn to widen their tolerance and experiment trying new tastes and textures. There is marked progress for one young person in now eating solid food, rather than sole reliance on gastrostomy feeds. Social workers see the progress young people make: 'he is now on less medication, has less behavioural incidents and presents as more relaxed and at ease.' Another professional said: 'She has flourished during her time there so far and is continuing to do so. Person centred practice is at the core of this home. Clear focus on improving outcomes and targets for young people.' Young people go to school regularly, in the on-site school or in the community. Staff actively support some in the classroom on-site and work well with all schools. They celebrate educational, developmental, and vocational achievements, each according to their ability. Health care is well managed and well-resourced so that young people get the specialist health service they need, as well as safe medication and first aid from trained staff. A range of consultant therapists is available at no extra cost to the placing authority: this way young people can have psychology, speech and language, occupational and physiotherapy assessments and advice immediately. Relationships between young people and staff are good. Staff provide a safe and stimulating adult presence. They are intensely engaged with young people, in constant supervision, and are always ready to do interesting activities. Young people are not bored and thrive with the positive attention. A visiting professional said, 'I always find a very friendly and cosy, homely atmosphere with staff being	

really caring, responsive and attentive to each child.'

Young people are influential in the development of the home and the plans for their care. Staff reduce barriers to inclusion arising from young people's disabilities, by maximising creative resources and their own skills in using signs, symbols, and communication tools. A parent said their child has, 'shown a marked improvement in communicating his needs.' Social workers also recognise this: 'Good inclusion of young people in feeding back information regarding the service.'

Young people's experiences on a day-to-day basis is of a highly supportive, individualised and crucially, non-institutional environment. One parent said the organisation, 'create good comfort and a healthy atmosphere'. The house and grounds look lovely. Indoor communal space is limited until the completion of an extension to provide more ground floor communal space. Dining and sitting room space is not enough for eight young people with their eight staff. Outdoor space, however, is plentiful in extensive wild and cultivated garden, a sensory playground, pond, fruit orchards, sensory fountain, hot tub and swimming pool. Young people also have free use of the good facilities in the school. Their bedrooms are private and personal, warm and well decorated, sometimes by them. One of the three bathrooms lacks a lock and so young people cannot be sure they will have privacy.

Staff prepare and support young people well towards the next stage of their lives. High staffing levels mean there are plenty of opportunities to learn skills for independence. Young people love work experience on the farm and are thinking about opportunities to become a chef. They have free access to the school's good learning resources in their leisure time. They can learn to use domestic washing machines, kitchen equipment, make toast, boil a kettle, and prepare a meal. They go on an annual holiday and are an active presence in the local community, integrated into neighbourhood life, hosting fetes, joining community groups, sensory and sports facilities.

The staff have worked well with young people and their families who live far from the home: they keep in touch with the people who are important. They have also shared parenting with families until they are able to fully care again. Placing authorities talk positively about how reassured families are by the creative use of technology to enable face-to-face telephone contact. Staff also encourage letter writing. Parents say they feel welcomed. One said, 'I don't know what we'd have done without them.' They say their children are, 'in good hands' and 'happy here.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement

Action by managers after safeguarding concerns is inconsistent. Records of historical safeguarding referrals are not readily available in the home and so managers cannot easily review progress, implement lessons learned, and sustain good practice. Children's records and monthly summaries do not always show these important events in their lives.

Behaviour management planning and monitoring require improvement. On a few occasions, staff have not managed challenging situations and behaviour well. Behaviour management plans were not always clear. While systems for behaviour management are on one level sophisticated, and allow for tracking, the registered person did not scrutinise behavioural plans or practice sufficiently to ensure conformity to the home's behaviour policy to diffuse challenging behaviour. The Registered Manager has already identified and taken action to improve this. Generally, clear and consistent boundaries and closer management, now contribute to a feeling of well-being and security for children and young people.

Health and safety systems require improvement to ensure that the registered person promptly reduces unnecessary environmental risks. A recent external fire risk assessment identified fire hazards in the environment. The registered person had not taken sufficient action to reduce any avoidable risk, or establish severity of risk, but is now rectifying this. Staff, making routine checks of the external environment, had failed to spot an unlocked garden compound with potential hazards. This was made safe during the inspection.

Safe recruitment systems ensure that all staff are subject to the majority of essential checks before starting work. However, the registered person does not obtain copies of their qualifications to verify their skills in working with children.

Staff are alert to young people's vulnerabilities arising from their learning disabilities, additional communication and behavioural needs. They identify, understand, and manage risk closely. This includes when young people may try to injure others. Their support, care and close supervision helps young people to become increasingly safe, including from the risk of going missing or self-injury. A parent commented on this. They feel their child is safe because there are: 'Well-trained staff who monitor children constantly.'

The registered person invests in good quality training by the Local Safeguarding Children's team. The Registered Manager has advanced training and works responsively with families, placing authorities and the local child protection services when there are care practice or child protection issues or concerns. The local Area Designated Officer, parents and placing authorities have no concerns about how safeguarding is managed. Placing authorities are positive that the staff communicate well, even about the difficult things.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
Leaders and managers prioritise the needs of young people, but this is not always clear in records of action and review following serious incidents, such as safeguarding investigations. This is especially evident in the lack of formal resolution of allegations, or practice concerns in staff supervision. The manager does not formally follow up such issues in supervision and so the organisation misses the opportunity to improve staff practice. There has not been, as directed by the responsible individual in April 2015, 'a coordinated, thoughtful management review', after significant events, so it is not clear how the registered person plans to implement lessons learnt or review improvement. Routine managerial and external monitoring, although generally satisfactory, has also not explicitly addressed these issues. The Statement of Purpose does not contain sufficient information about the qualifications, professional supervision, and effectiveness of the therapists working with young people. Despite this, the service is achieving its aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose: 'a person-centred and seamless approach to education, therapy, and care' for young people with special educational needs, learning disabilities, including autistic spectrum disorders. Young people living here make good progress. A placing social worker said the service has: 'met her needs when no one else could, they are open about the challenges and have shown commitment to her.' Where staff feel they are not able to meet young people's needs, they are proactive in flagging this up with the placing authority to request a review of the placement. The home is full for the first time since registration in 2010. The service offers a wide range of short, long-term and emergency placements and has worked to share the care of young people with parents. They have a good track record of moving young people in and on, to foster care, back home or to placements nearer home. Placing authorities are very satisfied with the service they purchase. A social worker said: 'Staff are willing to think outside the box when working with young people and this really works. I have been very impressed at the home's ability to be flexible and put my young person at the centre of the work they do.' The Registered Manager has been in post since April 2013, and resumed her post after a break in October 2014. She is experienced in residential care of children with disabilities and holds an appropriate nationally recognised qualification in care and management of young people. She has established good consultation with young people and now also with families and placing authorities. Young people get a good response when they	

raise complaints or just have issues to resolve. Young people are involved throughout in negotiations and resolutions. This empowers them and demonstrates the registered person's respect for their rights.

Staff are trained and supported well and the Registered Manager says they are already working towards supervision that is more professional. One-to-one staffing from a permanent and relief staff team, and little use of agency staff, means that consistent, familiar comfortable relationships develop between staff and young people. Staff have a good emphasis on nurturing, enjoyment, rest, sleep, good food, and healthy, enjoyable activities. They say: 'we don't contain children, we allow them to grow.'

The Registered Manager has previously established prompt action in response to any issues raised by Ofsted at inspection. The last inspection found no shortfalls. Despite the issues identified at this inspection, much is extremely positive about this flexible, responsive, and non-institutional service. The Registered Manager has now grasped the links between the safeguarding, staff development, leadership and management and potential for impact on children, and is taking action to improve.

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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