

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	27/01/2016
Unique reference number	SC407929
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Our Place (2008) Ltd
Responsible individual	David French
Registered manager	Lena Greatwich
Inspector	Christy Wannop

Inspection date	27/01/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Requires improvement
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged Requires improvement at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has improved effectiveness. Effective planning and child focused, creative support by the registered person results in a children's home that is really delivering good care and helping children and young people to reach their potential and live happy, fulfilling lives. They are all making good progress and the home is full. Individualised planning helps young people move on to their next stage. Staff have worked successfully to help two young people move on; one to a new service nearer home, and another to greater independence at a further education college. A social worker said, of their young person: 'Get the sense that staff know him well. They know about where they are going, with progress and independence.' One parent of a young person now moved on, said the service had been: 'Brilliant' in their work with transition.' She described staff, 'like a second family', and said her child, 'definitely flourished.' Careful admission planning, extensive information gathering, rigorous assessments and visits to speak with existing carers and schools, mean that new young people are quickly able to feel at home and experience stability. One placing social worker said, of a new child, that staff, 'had everything ready for him. He loves it there.' Another praised the input by staff: 'they've been brilliant- helped to stabilise and support him. Helped him to feel secure. Understanding and good at wrap-around support. Have also set up community and education activities. They have dealt with his issues.' An experienced management team of the registered manager and the care manager lead the service well. Scrutiny and monitoring is thorough. The responsible individual lives overseas, but spends a week a month on site at the service and is in close communication throughout to support development. Effective managerial succession planning aims ensure there is a smooth transition when the current registered manager assumes promotion to a different role at the service later in the year. She plans to hand over to the care manager, who is already qualified and experienced. Staff report an 'open door' to managers.	

Staff and managers respond well to any significant events and fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities in the event of allegation or child protection concerns. Children and young people have complex needs, learning disabilities and some have challenging behaviour: they require constant staff supervision. They do not 'go missing from care', but have on occasion run off from activities. The manager reviews such incidents thoroughly and improves care practice subsequently. Where safeguarding investigations have shown staff to be unsuitable to work with vulnerable children and young people, the registered person has taken effective action, working in partnership with the local authority safeguarding team. A good, recent development is the new safeguarding committee that involves staff of all levels and provides a forum to put safeguarding at the heart of the service.

Partnership working is good, as is professional challenge when needed. Excellent input by managers was able to draw two local authorities together to resolve funding and provision issues for a child and adolescent mental health service. Placing authorities view the service very positively. One said: 'Consistent contact with staff, always available. Really positive.' Parents whose children 'graduate' from the service join the management team as parent governors; their experience contributes to child focused developments.

Parents are happy with the support for their children. One spoke of her satisfaction: 'Very happy. Confident in the knowledge of the whole staff team. Manage issues in a low key way. Good relationships.' Some children and young people's health needs, such as epilepsy, put them at risk at night. Parents, placing social workers and in some cases, children, have been part of an agreement and regular review of the necessity of visual monitors at night.

The registered person has taken effective action to meet eight previous regulatory shortfalls and the majority of the good practice recommendations. Safeguarding practice is much stronger and the registered person now fully concludes all allegations and serious incidents, to ensure that any points for improvement are followed up in staff supervision, embedded in their care practice and checked through a cycle of managerial review.

The registered person has invested in a significant overhaul of health and safety systems and practice. This results in an environment which is much safer for children, young people and staff. Particular risks from fire are now resolved to the satisfaction of the local fire service. The majority of children and young people now have up-to-date local authority plans; where they do not, the registered person chases this and ensures that the local authority has signed up to their own, in-house plan. The registered person has made strenuous efforts to ensure that the majority of children and young people have a written agreement about responsibilities for decision making and a plan for delegated authority. All elements of safe recruitment procedures and information about staff qualifications are now routinely

held. Full information about the way therapists work at the home is now clear in the statement of purpose.

Some recommendations remain a work in progress, but have had the registered person's continuing attention. Information about significant events, such as safeguarding allegations, is now clear in children and young people's files and the home's confidential records. However, their monthly summary report omits even a reference to such events, despite a section heading precisely for this.

Significant work has taken place to reinforce staff understanding, adherence and implementation of formal behaviour management plans. On occasion, the manager has found that staff have not read or implemented specifics, or they have not updated or sought advice about strategies to manage some new behaviour or response. For example, occasional locking of the front door to prevent running off. This is an aspect for continued improvement under the direction of the manager and the behavioural coordinator at newly created 'team around the child' (TAC) meetings.

Existing strengths continue. Pro-active, well supported and increasingly well trained staff make sure that young people get out and about in the local community in a meaningful way. The manager has recruited a driver specifically to make this easy and guarantee that everyone has an equal and individual opportunity to go out and enjoy themselves after school. Good tools and techniques help children and young people overcome any barriers to communication, have their say and participate in decisions about their lives. A professional said staff were: 'good at listening, they all seem to get him.' The registered person is committed to a good quality external advocacy service: they are responsive to young people's concerns and complaints. A national advocacy service, commissioned to visit each month, said: 'Really good care, a beacon of good practice.'

Fabulous grounds, well equipped with large play equipment, mean that children and young people can enjoy the outdoors and be active, even in winter. A new extension, providing more living and activity rooms for children and better staff offices, is almost complete. Creative staff deployment ensures that staff use their skills to maximise direct work with children and young people. Additional staff have been recruited to work as cleaners, cooks, and classroom assistants ensuring care staff focus on care and have the time they need to do this well. The well-resourced staff team provides for high staffing ratios, a range of therapists, including now a specialist behavioural coordinator and a consultant nurse advisor. In addition, the manager has sourced and funded consultant play therapists for specific children.

A social worker spoke of never having heard her child laugh until moving to the children's home, she said the child was now: 'Safe, happy and relaxed, having lots of opportunities, building trust, I can really see the relationships building.'

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 registered school for eight young people in a separate building in the grounds.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/07/2015	CH - Full	Requires improvement
17/02/2015	CH - Interim	Improved effectiveness
02/10/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
07/01/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress

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.

Recommendations

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

- 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 the home's records on each child contribute to their life history. For example, ensure that 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, paragraph 14.5)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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