

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	16/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC416599
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	North Lakes Children's Services Limited
Registered provider address	Rayrigg Show Rooms, Rayrigg Road, Windermere LA23 3DN

Responsible individual	Craig Smith
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Marie Cordingley

Inspection date	16/11/2016
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	Requires improvement

SC416599

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people receive a consistently good standard of care, which is planned in line with their individual needs.
- Young people have the opportunity to build positive relationships with staff.
- Staff support young people to maintain relationships with people who are important to them.
- Staff support young people's educational achievement and ensure that any additional assistance that young people require is provided.
- Young people have the opportunity to enjoy fulfilling and valuable experiences on a day-to-day basis. Their talents and interests are recognised and encouraged.
- The needs of young people who are moving towards more independent living are carefully considered. Young people receive a good level of support in acquiring skills to help them succeed in independent living.
- Staff have a good understanding of risks to young people's safety and well-being, and are clear about the measures required to keep young people safe.
- Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding practice and are confident in reporting any concerns.
- Community professionals express satisfaction with the service and describe staff and the manager as cooperative and proactive.
- A consistent and positive approach to supporting young people's behaviours results in a low number of crisis situations. Clearer, individualised behaviour management plans would further support this good practice.
- Staff are provided with training to help ensure that they have the necessary skills to provide young people with safe and effective care. However, less than half of the staff members currently hold nationally recognised qualifications. This is an area that requires improvement.
- Staff feel well supported and confirm that they are able to share their views. Formal supervision and appraisal has not always been regularly provided.

This area is currently being addressed by the new manager.

- There is a clear management structure in place, and good support networks have been established for the new manager. The senior management team and newly appointed home manager are receptive to feedback and demonstrate commitment to improvement when areas for development are identified.

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Any use of restraint carries risks. These include causing physical injury, psychological trauma or emotional disturbance. When considering whether restraint is warranted, staff in children's homes need to take into account:
 - the age and understanding of the child;
 - the size of the child;
 - the relevance of any disability, health problem or medication to the behaviour in question and the action that might be taken as a result;
 - the relative risks of not intervening;
 - the child's previously sought views on strategies that they considered might de-escalate or calm a situation, if appropriate;
 - the method of restraint which would be appropriate in the specific circumstances; and
 - the impact of the restraint on the carer's future relationship with the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.55)
- All managers working in a children's home must have the qualification in regulation 28(2) within the relevant timescales listed in regulation 28(3). All staff in a care role, including external agency or bank staff, must have the qualification in regulation 32(4) within the relevant timescale listed in regulation 32(5). The registered person may extend the time period if the member of staff hasn't worked in the role for a prolonged period, such as sick leave or maternity leave, or if it is not reasonable to expect the member of staff to complete in this timescale due to the nature of the hours they work. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.12)
- Children should be encouraged by staff to see the home's records as 'living documents' supporting them to view and contribute to the record in a way that reflects their voice on a regular basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.19)
- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- All staff must have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. This appraisal should take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and children in the home's

care. As part of the performance management process, poor performance should be addressed by a timely plan to bring about improvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five children of the same gender. It is owned and operated by a private company. It is registered to care for children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
10/11/2015	Full	Good
23/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/06/2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good
Young people express satisfaction with life at the home and the care and support they receive. Their comments include: 'I've lived here a long time. They know me well'; 'They [the staff] are good to us'; and 'I like it living here. I get treated more grown up and I can do more things.' Two young people have left the home in recent months. These were both planned moves to semi-independent living. In both cases, the young people received a very good level of support from staff at the home. Staff travelled a significant distance to be on hand in the early stages of one young person's transition, as he had returned to his home area some miles away. Both young people had been long-term residents of the home and experienced positive outcomes. The admission of two new young people to the home has been managed very well. Thorough care planning and risk assessment documentation demonstrate that their needs were carefully considered prior to offering them a place at the home. In addition, careful consideration was given to the impact that their admission would have on the young people who were already resident. This demonstrates that the well-being of young people is central to the operation of the home. It is evident that young people share very positive relationships with their support staff. Young people were observed to be comfortable in the presence of staff, interacting with them in a warm and relaxed manner. Young people speak highly of staff, describing them as 'sound', 'funny', 'caring' and 'helpful'. The opportunity to build positive relationships supports young people's social development and emotional well-being and gives them a sense of belonging. Young people are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings about their own care, for example what they think is working well for them, through direct work and keyworker sessions. Some aspects of this work have fallen behind in recent months, but it is now back on course, with keyworker sessions taking place on a regular basis. Some of the recording relating to keyworker sessions could be improved. Examples were seen that did not fully reflect the young people's involvement and read more like reports owned by staff. Staff support young people to express their views about the home. Weekly meetings take place within which young people are encouraged to share their ideas. Examples of young people's ideas or requests being actioned are evident. This means that young people feel that their opinions are valued and that they have a say in what happens in their home.	

Staff support young people to maintain good health by promoting healthy lifestyles. Staff carefully monitor young people's individual health care needs and ensure that they receive medical care when necessary. Medicines prescribed for young people, or those used as homely remedies when required, are carefully managed. Weekly checks on medicine stocks and records ensure that any errors are quickly identified.

A young person who lives at the home recently sustained a serious injury which required medical treatment. Ongoing support in managing the young person's pain relief and physiotherapy was required from staff. A very well-detailed care plan was put in place, which provided clear guidance for staff in the care that the young person required. This helped to ensure that the young person received the care he required to make a good recovery.

All young people who live at the home currently attend education on a full-time basis. For one young person recently admitted to the home, this is the first time he has engaged in education for several years. Another one of the young people has recently obtained a number of GCSEs and is currently studying within further education. Young people's education care plans show that staff work closely with education providers to support young people's achievement. Support in education helps young people to achieve and gain skills for the future.

The senior management team has recently reviewed the support provided to young people preparing to move on to independence. This area has been developed to help ensure that young people receive the support they need to gain life skills and confidence and to succeed as young adults living independently. A pathway worker has been identified within the home to oversee the area and ensure that young people's pathway plans are effective.

The manager and staff support young people to maintain contact with their families, within the parameters of their local authority care plans. The support needed by each young person to maintain contact is detailed in their care plan. Where young people's families live far away, arrangements are made to assist with the cost and planning of accommodation to help facilitate their contact. Supporting young people to maintain contact with their families helps them to maintain relationships that are important to them and, promotes their emotional well-being.

Young people's talents and skills are recognised and encouraged. For example, one young person has recently designed his own clothing range and would like to develop this further. Staff have assisted him to identify sources of business enterprise support to assist him.

Staff support young people to engage in activities that they enjoy and to try new experiences. Young people spoke of a wide variety of activities, such as football, running, trampolining and visits to fun places, such as laser tag venues. A youth club providing numerous opportunities is very close to the home and is visited by the young people regularly. Some young people enjoyed a holiday to Disneyland Paris earlier in the year. Experiences such as these support young people's enjoyment, achievement and opportunity to engage in new experiences.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people who live at this home feel secure and have confidence in the staff to keep them safe. One young person commented, 'They definitely want to keep us safe. I think they would wrap us up in cotton wool if they could.' Young people are encouraged to share their concerns or talk about anything that is troubling them. A young person commented, 'They [the staff] always ask me if I am all right or if I want to talk about anything.' Another said he would always tell staff if he was worried and commented, 'they would always help me.' When the young people raise concerns, they are taken seriously and acted upon. One young person recently made a complaint, which was dealt with immediately by a member of the senior management team. This helps to ensure that young people feel safe and listened to. Robust safeguarding procedures help to ensure that all members of staff are clear about the action they must take in the event that any safeguarding concerns are identified. All staff are provided with training in safeguarding at the start of their employment and benefit from regular refresher training to support them in maintaining and updating their knowledge. All staff demonstrate a good understanding of their responsibilities to protect young people from harm and are fully aware of the roles of other agencies. Staff express confidence in their manager and senior management team and all members of staff commented that they would have no hesitation in blowing the whistle on potential abuse or poor practice. Any safeguarding concerns raised are carefully recorded, as is the action taken in response to them. Clear chronologies are maintained to demonstrate the involvement of external agencies and the outcome of any investigations. This helps	

to ensure that young people are safeguarded from abuse.

Individualised risk assessments are in place for each young person and are regularly reviewed. Staff ensure that young people's risk assessments are revised and updated following any significant events or when new information is identified. This helps to ensure that staff have clear, up-to-date guidance on maintaining young people's safety and wellbeing.

The manager and staff work closely with external professionals to maintain young people's safety. A recent increase in one young person's risk-taking behaviour has been identified and addressed at the request of the home, through strategy meetings with the relevant professionals. A social worker involved in this young person's care described staff as extremely proactive and very committed to maintaining the young person's safety and well-being.

There are few incidents of young people being missing from home. There are comprehensive risk assessments in place for each young person as well as clear protocols to be followed in the event that they do become missing. This helps to ensure that staff have clear guidance about the action to take to safeguard young people who are missing.

Individualised behaviour support plans are in place for each young person, describing potential behaviours and known triggers for particular behaviours. The information included in the plans is useful but could be expanded upon to provide more detailed guidance about individual strategies to support young people. This would assist staff in maintaining a consistent approach.

Staff demonstrate a confident approach to supporting young people in crisis and are aware of the importance of de-escalation. Situations within the service do not frequently reach crisis-point, due to the positive support provided by staff. Incidents requiring physical intervention are very low in number.

The safety of the environment provided to young people is regularly assessed. During a period of refurbishment following recent flood damage, a member of the senior management team regularly liaised with external professionals to ensure that young people's safety was protected.

A thorough approach to the employment of new staff members helps to maintain young people's safety and well-being. All prospective employees are required to undergo a series of background checks prior to being offered employment. This reduces the risk of young people being exposed to people of unsuitable character.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The home experienced an unsettled period following the long-term absence and subsequent resignation of the registered manager. Suitable arrangements were put in place for the day-to-day running of the home in the registered manager's absence, which included increased support from the senior management team. A permanent manager has now been appointed, who is due to begin the registration process with Ofsted. The manager demonstrated a good understanding of the role and the needs of the young people being supported, throughout the inspection. There has also been some recent disruption within the senior management team, which has resulted in a change in the registered individual for the service. This has been managed by the organisation in a satisfactory manner, and a review of the operational management structure has been completed. This has helped to ensure that the changes have not had an impact on the quality and safety of the care provided to young people. The service continues to operate in line with its statement of purpose, which has been fully updated to reflect the changes that have occurred. The aims of the service are centred on maintaining young people's safety and well-being and supporting them to achieve and lead enjoyable lives. For example, admissions are managed in a very careful way, to help ensure that new young people coming to live at the home do not have a negative impact on those already living there. The home experienced an extreme challenge earlier in the year when it was flooded and uninhabitable for several months. This situation was managed exceptionally well by the organisation. Young people were provided with suitable, alternative accommodation within the organisation, which meant that the consistency of the support young people received and of those supporting them was not adversely affected. When accommodating young people in alternative environments, the senior management team liaised closely with external consultants, such as local fire safety officers, to ensure that young people's safety was not compromised. Staff now report a settling picture, following the difficulties experienced by the service. All staff members commented that they felt that the home had returned to stability and that they had confidence in the new manager. One staff member commented, 'We have had a difficult time but things are finally back on track now.'	

Staff describe a good level of support from the management team on a day-to-day basis and commented that the manager and team leaders are approachable. Out-of-hours on-call arrangements were described as satisfactory and no staff member had ever experienced difficulty in accessing a manager when needed. While all staff members have recently been provided with formal supervision, this is an area where shortfalls have previously occurred. Records show gaps in the supervision programme over recent months, as well as a significant delay in staff receiving annual appraisals. This has been identified by the new manager, who is taking steps to address it. Regular supervision and appraisal is vital in supporting good practice and the personal development of team members.

A comprehensive mandatory training programme enables members of staff to develop their knowledge and helps to ensure that they have the necessary skills to provide young people with safe and effective care. The turnover of staff experienced at the home since the last inspection has had an impact on the ratio of care workers who hold nationally recognised qualifications. Less than half the staff members currently hold them. This shortfall has been identified, and those still to complete their qualifications have started the relevant training.

The senior management team ensures that there are systems in place to monitor the safety and quality of the service provided. These include monthly visits by an external professional, during which various aspects of the service are assessed. The manager was able to demonstrate suitable action taken in response to the recommendations made following these assessments. In addition, the manager's monthly checklist provides a system which enables them to identify necessary improvements.

A comprehensive audit has recently been completed by the organisation. This has identified some weaknesses and inconsistencies in practice, some of which are well established, largely in relation to recording information. In response to these findings, the senior management team has provided additional training for staff and increased monitoring. This demonstrates a commitment towards 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 the '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 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 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 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 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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