

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	14/10/2015
Unique reference number	SC423617
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Acorn Children's Homes Limited
Responsible individual	Waheed Ashiq
Registered manager	Susan Rai
Inspector	Mark Fitzgerald

Inspection date	14/10/2015
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

SC423617

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people make good progress during their time at the home.
- Young people are happy to live at the home and develop in confidence and self-esteem.
- The quality of support and care provided by the staff team is good.
- Staff help young people to overcome difficult experiences and to develop new trusting relationships.
- Clear expectations of good behaviour are part of the culture of the home. Young people respond to this.
- Education is central to the routine of the home and staff support young people to attend and achieve.
- Young people report they feel safe living at the home.
- Safeguarding practices in the home are effective in protecting young people. Risk assessments are thorough and adapt according to circumstances. Safe recruitment of new staff is robust.
- Staff act as advocates for young people and challenge partner agencies on their behalf when required.
- The staff ensure the house is well maintained and decorated. Young people respect the fabric of the building.
- The manager provides good leadership to an effective staff team.

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
The registered provider must appoint a person ("the independent person") to visit and report on the children's home carried on by the registered provider. The independent person must be employed solely to examine and scrutinise critically— (a) the way that a home is carried on or managed; and (b) the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 43(4))	31/12/2015

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to three young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by a private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/03/2015	CH - Interim	Improved effectiveness
20/06/2014	CH - Full	Good
04/03/2014	CH - Interim	Inadequate progress
04/04/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
The young people in the home make good progress in most areas of their lives. They are cared for in a homely, supportive environment by a competent staff team. Young people themselves rate the home highly and feel well cared for. They grow in confidence as a result of their time in the home. Young people take an active part in deciding the content and structure of their care. They participate in young people's meetings and take the opportunity to express their personal preferences around food choices and activity options. They also attend their care planning reviews and feel able to have their say. Young people play a role in assessing prospective new staff. Currently, residents are negotiating with the manager the terms under which the home could have a pet cat. Young people are empowered to contribute to decision making. It gives them a sense that their points of view are listened to and taken seriously. Staff work proactively with young people and develop meaningful relationships that engender trust. This is impressive given the complex family situations that young people have experienced prior to coming to live at the home. Despite their varying abilities, young people are engaged in their different education provisions. Wherever possible, staff at the home have been able to maintain the existing educational placements young people had before coming to the home. This involves transporting young people some distance to their school. Young people's attendance levels at school are high. Staff and managers intervene to challenge schools, where they feel that there is not sufficient support provided for young people. This support demonstrates the home's commitment to education and reinforces its importance to young people. Young people are encouraged by staff to pursue a wide range of hobbies. Some of these involve a high level of physical activity, such as karate, swimming, football and street dancing. Others are craft-based interests that are followed within the home. Staff meet the health needs of young people effectively. Young people have access to local health services when required. Medication is administered properly according to need. Therapeutic support is accessed on a regular basis. Good behaviour is encouraged on a consistent basis. Staff members make clear to young people where the boundaries on behaviour lie. This clarity makes young	

people feel safe, as they understand the culture and expectations staff place on them. For the most part, young people respond and adapt their behaviours accordingly.

Support to sustain contact with family members is provided by the staff team. A rigorous assessment process insures that such arrangements are regular, enjoyable and safe. In this way, young people's relationships with family members are maintained where it is safe to do so.

The quality of individual sessional work conducted by staff members with the young people is high. Young people take up the opportunity to talk with a trusted adult about the circumstances in their lives that have led to them coming into care. This work can be challenging at times but ultimately it serves a beneficial purpose for young people. It helps them to gain an insight into their family relationships and helps them to consider their lives after care.

The provision of independent advocacy to young people in the home is strong. A competent and professional visitor to the home provides a robust external view of the care provided and report his views to the manager on a regular basis.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Young people report that they feel safe in the home and they are kept safe by the efforts of staff in conjunction with partner agencies. In response to the question 'what makes you feel safe here at the home', one young person responded: 'when the staff show they care'. Young people are content to stay in and around the home and missing episodes are very few. The link between missing episodes and the danger of child sexual exploitation is always a prime consideration in such situations. Assessment and management of risk by staff is thorough, but this is applied with a light-touch. When asked what she liked most about the home, one young person said: 'I like the freedom I've got here'. The relationships that staff form with young people are such that the adults are trusted to listen to, and take seriously, what is shared with them. On admission to the home, staff explain to young people the role they have to protect themselves from harm. Young people respond to this and behave responsibly. The staff team has a firm approach in response to the potential dangers associated with new technologies. Access to social networking sites is not allowed and use of	

an internet-connected computer is closely supervised. Software to block inappropriate content provides another layer of security and protection for these vulnerable young people.

Staff members who are alert to instances of distress and conflict, all manage challenging behaviours effectively. Where behaviours persist that pose a significant risk to young people, an assessment is carried out to gauge the wider effect on the group living at the home. Such an assessment of risk and impact has recently resulted in the termination of placements, due to the negative consequences of bullying behaviour for young people. The needs of vulnerable young people are carefully considered, and they are well protected by such decisive action.

Wherever possible, community resolutions are used as a response to the low level of offending that takes place in the home. This insures that such instances do not become a matter of long-term record for young people. Such resolutions avoid criminalising young people unnecessarily.

There have been a number of new staff recruited to the home since the last full inspection. The registered manager robustly administers the selection and induction processes. The effective selection of new staff provides a major element of protection for young people. Previous work histories and references of new appointees are thoroughly checked.

Room searches take place infrequently. On the occasions that they have been necessary, they have been effective in preventing incidents of self-harming behaviour. Regular checks to the equipment and safety systems in the home mean that it provides a safe environment in which to live.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
The manager has been registered for four years, the last three years of which have been spent managing this home. She is appropriately qualified and experienced and leads the staff team with confidence and enthusiasm. Through detailed monitoring processes, she is able to see trends and patterns in behaviours. This information informs the staff team's approach to the care provided. In addition to critically scrutinising the way that the home is managed and the quality of care provided for children, the independent person also supports the manager's professional development. These additional duties, whilst beneficial to the manager, disqualify the independent person from the scrutiny role, under current regulations.	

A high standard of care is provided in accordance with the provider's description in its statement of purpose. Since the last inspection, appropriate decisions to end placements have been taken by the manager on safeguarding grounds. This had the effect of protecting a vulnerable resident who continues to thrive.

The registered manager has a firm grasp of the provision of care. She leads the team as a role model and she is frequently involved in providing hands-on care. When necessary, the manager has challenged partner agencies when she has felt that young people have been treated unfairly.

The staff team is well-supported by regular staff meetings and individual supervision sessions with line managers. Both of these support structures offer staff members the opportunity to reflect on the quality of care provided to young people.

The recent influx of new staff has brought a fresh approach to the team, as the manager uses the skills of new staff to good effect. These additions, working alongside more experienced staff, provide a good balance to the team and provide a fresh impetus.

Young people have their needs met because of the good working relationships the home has with other agencies. The staff team works effectively in partnership with a range of professionals to ensure that care and placement plans are current and acted on.

Care planning is effective and uses a unique tool developed by the manager named 'My Journey'. This document contains both the formal information required by a care plan, but presents these details in the style that is child friendly. As young people are invited to add to these documents alongside staff, they are helping to form the narrative for their own time in care.

The house is located on a main road in a city residential suburb. Public transport is easily accessible, as are local shops. The manager takes pride in the physical appearance of the home. She has been creative in securing funding to develop the garden area of the home. An ongoing plan of refreshing rooms in need of decoration every six months is established. The home is clean, well decorated and homely. The views of partner agencies are sought to contribute to the home's location risk assessment, which has recently been updated.

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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