

SC424897

Registered provider: Clover Childcare Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is privately owned. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 28 to 29 November 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 27 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Staff invest time and make every effort to build excellent relationships with children.
- The staff have high aspirations for all of the children.
- Staff work exceptionally well in partnership with schools. This means that children settle in school, make friends and gain knowledge and skills.
- Multi-agency work with in-house therapists means that the children receive the highest quality of all-round care.
- Staff are supported to understand the needs of the children. They work in a non-judgemental way to manage behaviours that may challenge other providers.
- Risks are well known and understood. High-quality analysis of potential hazards helps children to manage their own levels of risk.
- Care plans are excellent, and are reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to meet the children's changing needs.
- Staff listen proactively in order to understand the children's views. The staff look to include these views in every aspect of the home and daily routines.
- Focused supervision means that staff are always striving to improve outcomes for the children.
- The staff team's work is improved through research-led innovative practice that enables the staff to help the children meet their targets and goals.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
05/12/2016	Full	Outstanding
23/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
13/01/2016	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children receive an outstanding service while they live at this home. The staff invest time and energy, and are highly committed to building excellent relationships with the children. These interactions are developed using a specific therapeutic approach. The whole staff group delivers this intervention. As a result, there is a consistent approach to meeting the children's complex needs. In-house experts support the staff to strengthen their understanding of the children. Consequently, caring and emotionally available adults are accessible to the children. This means that children have trusted and knowledgeable staff members with whom they can talk.

Children are helped to have their wishes and views heard. Discussions are held about the activity plans for the coming week during the regular community meetings. Staff use these meetings to challenge any unacceptable behaviour, such as bullying, that may have become apparent. During these meetings, staff listen carefully to the children's views. Children are sensitively helped to understand, if their wishes cannot be acted on.

Children spoken to during this inspection spoke fondly of their key workers. The children's comments included:

- 'I enjoy living here.'
- 'I get a lot of help with my family contact.'
- 'I have been going to school, and the staff help me to get to and from the school.'
- 'Staff help me to understand the things that have upset me and they [the staff] try to help me to keep calm.'

The careful and skilful approach used by the staff means that children who have experienced significant trauma are helped to begin to gently recover. Some of these children have experienced multiple placement moves within their families and while being looked after. As a result, they often arrive distressed. This emotional upset is sometimes displayed in behaviour which the children find difficult to manage. Through the therapeutic approach and support, the children make exceptional progress in self-regulating and their conduct has improved.

The managers and staff use research-based practice to help the children to achieve outstanding outcomes. For example, the manager has noted staff members' concerns about the increased number of aggressive incidents. The registered manager and the senior managers have commissioned a psychologist to review the data regarding these incidents. Using specific therapeutic intervention, the psychologist and managers have developed a practical method of measuring and reducing these incidents. Consequently, staff members' concerns have reduced and children's needs are better met.

As a result of the support given to them, the children have completed coursework at school that has led to recognised qualifications. The children's achievements will help them to move towards further education or work placements. The children have highly individual plans that enable them to engage with their education. There are excellent links between the home and the local schools. The staff attend school alongside the children to ensure continuity of care and support. This has seen children settle, learn skills and develop friendship groups outside the home.

The manager is developing pathway plans for those children whose care plans aim for them to live independently. The plans include the children learning budgeting and cooking skills prior to leaving the home. The manager has challenged a local authority's plan to move a child into a flat as the child had not been provided with the relevant knowledge, and was not proficient in managing their own needs. This led to a change in the plan, with the child remaining in placement at the home to complete their independent living plan.

Staff support the children to participate in a wide range of interesting activities. The large well-kept grounds provide opportunities for children to play. Some of the children attend football clubs in the community. This supports healthy lifestyles and gives them a wider peer group. Other children like rock climbing, trampoline clubs and going to the cinema. If needed, the staff attend these clubs along with the children. This continues until the child is confident about attending, as long as their ongoing assessment confirms that they will be safe in the community.

There is a great deal of warmth shared between the staff and the children. The staff know these children exceptionally well. In particular, the staff are attuned to the signs of distress that each child shows because they have a thorough understanding of the children's needs. The staff have developed exceptional skills that enable them to help the children to develop an understanding of their own needs. As a result, over time, the children's distress lessens and their self-esteem rises.

Skilfully written contact plans support the children to have more direct contact with their families. This means that relationships with these important people are maintained and improved. There is a clear debrief with the in-house therapist following each contact, to look at ways that the staff can improve the quality of the interactions and, as a result, improve the visits. Staff have been very proactive in finding independent language lessons for some children for whom English is an additional language. This means that the children can continue conversations with their extended families.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Children feel safe at this home. Observation of the children's interactions with staff shows that there are excellent relationships between them. As a result, children do not go missing from this home. Staff are aware of, and understand, the action that they need to take should a child go missing.

The staff have all received training to raise their awareness of the risks of child sexual exploitation, and other forms of exploitation, in the community. The children are particularly vulnerable, given some of their learning needs. Staff ensure that close supervision and observation are maintained in order to promote the children's safeguarding needs. The staff act quickly to respond to inappropriate behaviour which may lead to bullying.

Trained staff have intervened to prevent children from harming themselves or others on 84 occasions since the last inspection. The manager and the provider have recognised that this is a high number of physical interventions. They have commissioned a research psychologist to draw up an innovative piece of work that links to the therapeutic intervention used at this home. This has strengthened the staff team's understanding, and has reduced the recent number of restraints significantly.

Staff spend time with in-house experts to reflect on improving ways of managing the children's behaviours. Consequently, staff focus on learning to understand what children are communicating through their behaviour. A placing social worker commented:

The child I placed has made significant progress. A big part of this is that they [child] had not been able to moderate their own emotions. Initially, the child could not manage change, but now they have been enabled to manage changes in their routine, such as at school. This child has built a great relationship with their key worker. This worker has taken the child to activities where the child has improved their social skills. They [child] has made a good friendship outside the home through attending this activity. This child has also developed skills in building and construction. This supports their creativity and improves the child's self-esteem. The home has also helped the child to develop good independent living skills.

The management team is reflective and innovative in its approach to ensuring the safety of children. For example, managers have worked with the in-house psychologist to understand risk-taking behaviours. This has seen the development of high-quality practice that underpins the excellent relationships between the children and staff. The children have the opportunity to talk about any worries or other issues that they may have. Consequently, there has been a reduction in behaviours that are difficult to manage.

A careful and thorough matching process is conducted on receipt of referrals. Discussions with the in-house therapy team ensure that a holistic approach addresses any potential areas of difficulty from the time that a new child moves into the home.

The location risk assessment comprehensively considers the potential risks in the vicinity. The manager ensures that she regularly reviews this assessment and updates it with any new information that is available. This provides an accurate overview of potential strengths and risks.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

A highly skilled and confident manager leads this service. The manager has been in post for three years and holds a relevant level 5 diploma. She takes every opportunity to focus the efforts of the staff in order to provide an outstanding service that meets the children's needs. Staff are encouraged, through high-quality, regular supervision, to develop their relationships with the children. The manager is open to new ideas and uses reflection to help the staff to understand the impact that meeting the children's needs has on their own emotional needs.

The manager is highly ambitious for the children. By working with senior managers at the service, she ensures that all of the staff are equally aspirational for the children to receive the best all-round care. The training pathway provides high-quality input from the multi-agency staff team. This means that staff members' skills are up to date. All eligible staff have completed the required diploma-level qualification.

Partnership work with the in-house therapy service has helped the staff to develop innovative new ways of working with the children. For example, the staff have consulted with the therapists on the outcomes in the 'strengths and difficulties' questionnaires in order to develop targets for children. Targets form part of the key-work strategy. The manager and senior staff ensure that the staff are achieving the desired outcomes by monitoring and reviewing these sessions. This process has seen targets met quickly and relationships enhanced because of its joined-up approach. This excellent model of monitoring means that the manager is certain about the progress that the children are making.

The senior staff and manager are proactive in taking on board the children's views. This has enabled the staff to decorate rooms and communal areas in the style that the children have chosen. The home is spacious and well decorated. It has a calm atmosphere, generated by the quality of the staff members' interactions with the children.

Feedback from placing social workers is particularly positive. One social worker commented:

The child whom I placed has made outstanding progress from when they arrived. They were very distressed and there were many physical interventions. Staff have been reflective of the child's needs and respectful of the child's individuality, and this helps the child to feel safe. They [staff] would always be mindful, always looking at ways to manage the child's changing needs. This has seen the number of restraints reduced as the child has become stabilised.

The manager skilfully uses feedback from her monthly audits and the information from the home's independent visitor. As a result, she is clear about any shortfalls and can quickly act to improve these areas. She includes the children's views in this monitoring, which means that the children play an active part in the improvement of the home.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC424897

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Clover Childcare Services Limited

Responsible individual: Daniel Knight

Registered manager: Joanne Turner

Inspector

Michael Mulvaney: social care inspector

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