

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	18/08/2015
Unique reference number	SC429995
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	A Significant Other Limited
Registered person address	Green Towers, Thislewood Lane, Wolsingham, BISHOP AUCKLAND, County Durham, DL13 3HQ

Responsible individual	Ms Donna Thorne
Registered manager	Ms Donna Thorne
Registered manager	Ms Elizabeth Bennett
Inspector	Mr Colin Imrie

Inspection date	18/08/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained 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

SC429995

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The staff have a nurturing approach to the care they offer the young people.
- The staff are trained and supported by a psychologist who guides them to implement a range of more in-depth psychological approaches which does benefit the young people.
- The young people have excellent opportunities to benefit from looking after a range of animals and pets kept on the smallholding attached to the home which is therapeutic and positive.
- The staff are very organised around planning and working with the young people and this is effective in helping them settle and work through some of their difficulties.
- The home has a calm and relaxed atmosphere and makes the most of its rural location with good links to the local community.
- The young people are well supported to attend school and college and are making good progress in their education and training.
- The young people are able to make good progress towards acquiring independence skills with support from the staff.
- The young people are supported to keep in close contact with their family and friends where appropriate.

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
5 Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met 5. In order to meet the engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met standard, with particular reference to ensuring local authorities who fail to provide independent return interviews are challenged and this matter escalated as appropriate, the registered person must ensure that: (c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans.	1/10/2015
7 The children's views, wishes and feelings standard 7. In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, with particular reference to updating the children's guide, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2)(c) keep the children's guide and the home's complaints procedure under review and seek children's comments before revising either document.	20/10/2015
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if- (4)(c) there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; (d) a child protection enquiry involving a child - (i) is instigated. (Regulation 40(4)(c) and (d)(i))	17/09/2015

The registered person must ensure that all employees – (4)(b) receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(b)) In particular, the frequency must be that stated in the home's statement of purpose.	17/09/2015
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Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered for up to four children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and is run by a private organisation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/01/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22/10/2014	Full	Good
27/01/2014	Interim	Satisfactory Progress
18/04/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
The home is situated in a rural location and offers a homely and therapeutic environment where young people can live in peaceful surroundings. While staff are nurturing and caring, they also offer firm clear boundaries to the young people. Young people make good relationships with the staff and the home has a relaxed feel about it. Young people approach staff easily and talk and joke as well as being able to talk about more serious issues. Staff take time to explain issues to young people and are able to discuss these with them. Most of the young people are old enough to have plenty of time away from the home pursuing their own interests but they still choose to spend time with staff and enjoy shared activities. One young person who a little while ago was saying they wanted to leave is now saying they want to stay as long as they can. This demonstrates the level of attachment they have with the staff and this is positive. The home's Statement of Purpose says it offers 'animal assisted therapy'. As practised here, it is an informal way of working rather than a distinct therapy where the young people are encouraged to make relationships with the various animals and pets kept on the smallholding next to the home and to take some responsibility for their care. Some of the young people clearly enjoy this interaction and responsibility a great deal. It allows young people an opportunity to give something of themselves while looking after the animals which need a regular commitment. Staff report that some young people are calmer after spending time with the animals. The rural location and the emphasis on working with the animals provides a very different feel to this home. There is always something to do and ensures that the home feels relaxed and peaceful. The young people are all making progress with their education and training. One young person who had not been to school prior to coming to this home is now about to start the second year of a college course. They are also doing additional maths study through the summer holiday to ensure they are ready for the course. Another young person who has lived at the home for some time has full attendance at school and is about to move on to a college place. Both other young people are newer to the home and have missed a great deal of schooling. They are now about to go to college as well. This engagement is very	

positive and demonstrates that young people and staff working together to create good outcomes for education.

The young people are well supported to have their health needs met. Most of the young people are able to access a range of health services such as doctors and dentists themselves and do this regularly. A number of the young people are engaged with various other professionals to assist them with their emotional difficulties and this is really positive.

Staff work with an external psychologist to provide an individualised service to each young person. They use an organised system to assess, intervene and monitor progress around a range of development, resilience and attachment issues. This system is comprehensive and allows targeted care planning around emotional growth and development. It also demonstrates clear progress. One young person who had been very isolated is now socialising much more. This young person's mother says she is really pleased with this progress. Another young person with a very traumatic background is now developing well physically and emotionally and is much more outgoing. One other parent said she had, 'nothing but praise' for the staff team saying they had calmed her son down.

Some of the young people are very independent and staff support this well. The provider owns a horse and one of the young people takes responsibility for its daily care. This young person often takes the horse out for a lengthy hack in the surrounding countryside with friends and is trusted to do this. Two of the young people find casual work in the local area, helping to lamb, milk cows and beat for grouse. This demonstrates the excellent ties the home has with the local community, the support and encouragement the staff give the young people and the motivation and interest of the young people. The home takes part in local rural events such as countryside shows and country activities. One young person was taking a driving lesson during the inspection which is excellent preparation for independence.

Young people are supported to make and keep good contact with their families. Some are able to do this independently, others have more supervised contact and others invite their families to the home to spend time with them. The family of one young person visited during the inspection and were made to feel very welcome. After spending some time at the home they were able to go out to a local restaurant for lunch and return later to have a cup of coffee. The relaxed nature of the home and the staff and young people allows this to happen easily. Young people play a full part in helping to make decisions around the home and are fully involved in planning their care. One young person who has a great interest in internet games is going to go to college to study on a course designed for the gaming industry.

The social worker of one young person said that there had been an incredible change in them over the past six months. She said the staff are very nurturing,

and said that the young person, 'had turned their life around and now had a goal and a purpose in life'. The social worker went on to say she rarely saw outcomes as good as this.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The young people at this home are kept safe. Staff understand the risks and take good steps to minimise these by working closely with the young people. One young person with a history of extensive drug use has been supported to make substantial changes to their risky behaviour and has now almost stopped doing this. Earlier in the year there were some episodes of missing. Most of these were with a young person who was only at the home for a short time before being placed in a secure children's home. One other young person left the home after he was unable to settle well enough to remain. Other episodes of missing have been less serious and staff have worked very well with the young person concerned and these appear to have decreased to the point where they are no longer happening. Staff made good efforts to locate young people when they went missing. When young people returned to the home staff did ask placing social workers to attend and complete a return interview but these did not happen. A requirement has been made to escalate these requests should they be needed again. Staff generally avoid the use of physical interventions, preferring to use negotiation. There has been a small number of very low level interventions but no restraints at all. When young people have shown challenging behaviour, staff are able to talk to young people and discuss issues. They do use a system of positive rewards for good behaviour and also have a system of incentives in place which provide young people with the opportunity to gain additional pocket money or additional activities. These are effective at reducing incidents of challenging behaviour. Staff do use some sanctions and these are reparative and restorative in practice. Young people say they feel safe in this environment and clearly feel relaxed and secure. There have been some staff changes recently and recruitment processes are safe and comprehensive. There have been no child protection concerns in the home and bullying almost never happens. On the few occasions when some bullying has occurred it is quickly dealt with.	

The house is well maintained and is free of health and safety hazards. Clearly having animals around the smallholding does mean that there are some risks that are hard to control at all times. However, there are risk assessments in place. Young people are taught about cleanliness and hygiene around animals and also taught about the possibility of minor injuries from chickens, ducks, cats and dog. Young people are supervised until they prove they are responsible enough to be on their own. Only one young person is able to handle the horse without supervision at present but others can do so with supervision.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
The Registered Manager has only been in post for a few months and is newly qualified having just finished a level 5 diploma. She has made a very good start and is clearly aware of all the aspects of managing a children's home. The manager has been well supported by the senior staff team. Staff say she is supportive and knowledgeable and she clearly has good relationships with the young people. The manager is clearly very child centred and is keen to develop the more therapeutic aspects of the work. The home has quite a small staff team and they work well together covering any absences within the team. All the young people are making good progress in their lives. One of the young people has made exceptional progress. The manager is planning well with all the young people. They all have ambitious plans to attend college next year and pursue courses that interest them and this is a result of hard work by the staff team as well as the young people wanting to develop good career options. The manager and team has started to use a system of planning and intervention that is very much based on working on underlying issues of attachment, development, and resilience. This addresses the needs of the young people and provides the basis for in-depth work. If key-work is planned well like this, then young people can and do gain a greater understanding of their situation and are able to deal with their difficulties. One young person has gained a greater understanding of their family because of this work which has meant the quality of contact has improved. There have been a number of unfounded allegations and these have been handled well by the manager. Ongoing work with the young person is taking place and appears to be helping this particular difficulty.	

At the last inspection there was a requirement to ensure the statement of purpose accurately described the service and this has been completed. The other requirement from the previous inspection was around updating the policy on use of online devices and there is now a filter on the house internet.

The manager is monitoring the quality of care and is completing the required internal monitoring reports. The manager has not notified Ofsted of two issues which the inspector felt should have been notified. Also, in the period since the last inspection another incident which required a notification was not made. A requirement has been made to ensure future events are notified quickly.

There is a children's guide available for young people but this now requires some updating. The guide could be more child friendly and would benefit from the input of some young people. A requirement has been made to complete this.

The manager has been doing all the supervision for the staff team and this has been good quality. However, the supervisions have not always been as regular as the Statement of Purpose has said it will be done and a requirement has been made to ensure supervision is carried out according to the Statement of Purpose. Appraisals have all been carried out appropriately.

There is a development plan in place and the manager is confident about areas of work which need further development and about what the home does well. There is further training for all the staff team around their chosen model of assessment and intervention and this will build on the training so far.

The staff team are well qualified and have completed all their required training. Some of the staff team have developed specific areas of expertise and use this to provide training for the rest of the team. One member of staff takes responsibility for promoting ideas around the animal assisted work and this is popular.

The manager is developing good relationships with other professionals. This is working well with some of the young people starting to engage well with workers from specialist services. One young person has engaged with a worker from a mental health assessment team and this is very positive and may well help this young person to manage their emotional difficulties much better.

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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