

# SC471178

Registered provider: Dove Adolescent Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is a privately operated children's home. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

**Inspection dates:** 14 to 15 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:** 28 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:

- The young people receive exceptionally good-quality care. Staff are attuned to their extremely complex needs. They clearly understand the young people well and have developed strong attachments. The young people can speak openly to staff about their anxieties and are receptive to advice and support.
- The environment is highly nurturing, warm and responsive. Emotional warmth is clearly evident between the staff and the young people. Young people receive personalised and individualised care that is tailored to their care and learning needs.
- The young people who receive and engage in therapy are highly supported through the whole process. Staff clearly understand the importance of young people developing emotional resilience. Their commitment to each young person is unconditional and outcomes for young people are positive.
- The manager and staff are very creative in their consultation with young people. They ensure that each young person has a voice in all decisions made about their care and are supported through this process.
- The manager is highly aspirational and leads a diverse and skilled staff team. She is a confident and able leader, with considerable experience and compassion.
- The safety and well-being of the young people are paramount. Transitions both into and out of the home are planned well in response to the individualised needs of the young person.

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement    |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 28/03/2017      | Interim         | Improved effectiveness  |
| 11/01/2017      | Full            | Outstanding             |
| 26/02/2016      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness |
| 25/11/2015      | Full            | Outstanding             |

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The young people have developed extremely healthy and trusting relationships with the manager and the staff. Young people flourish and their lives are enriched living at this home. The home radiates warmth, love and a sense of belonging. The young people have grown up with the same staff throughout their placement, affording them continuity and stability of care. The young people feel safe and well cared for. One young person stated in a letter to her guardian: 'My wish is to stay here because the carers are nice, caring and supportive and I feel that I can talk to them. I feel that I've settled better than I would have anywhere else. This week has been one of the best weeks of my life.'

All the young people are engaged in education programs that are tailored to their individual learning needs, and in the context of their starting points. The staff are particularly attuned and focused on ensuring and enabling the young people to achieve not only academically but in their social interactions with others. Young people's increased social skills, self-confidence and emotional resilience have paved the way for significant achievements and progress beyond expectations in their academic attainment. One young person stated: 'Staff did not give up on me. I passed my GCSEs and I have certificates in music and art. I am now doing media studies at college.' For another young person, staff sourced a placement at an animal sanctuary that has done wonders in stabilising behaviours. The young person told me: 'I love it there. I get to learn about all the animals and how to look after them and I get to stroke and lie with them!' This placement is consolidated by the academic studies in animal care.

Each young person thrives on having a highly structured and predictable routine. The young people contribute and participate in developing their weekly planner that has seen increased engagement in all aspects of their lives. They enjoy extremely fulfilling lives. Staff spend quality time with the young people showing a genuine interest in their likes and dislikes. The young people are exposed to a range of activities, pastimes, outings and holidays that give them new life experiences. For one young person, this is balanced against his ability to be more independent and enjoy 'time out' with his friends. One member of staff has promoted two young people's musical and song writing skills and they have spent time in a recording studio and have made a CD. The young person said: '[Name] played the drums, I wrote the songs and played the keyboard and [Staff Name] played the guitar and vocals. It was an amazing opportunity.'

The young people are consulted and supported to participate in all decisions about their lives. Focused work has prepared young people to make sensible choices and to develop strategies to manage their own feelings and emotions. Key-work sessions address the young people's diverse vulnerabilities in areas such as self-harm, attachment issues and sexual health. Staff are resilient and patient with the young people and follow the detailed and extremely well-written care plans in their management of behaviour. This approach has seen a significant reduction in one young person's need to self-harm.

Positive relationships have been established with health and social care professionals that promote young people's access to additional and specialist services. This coordinated and well-managed approach within a culture of openness ensures that their complex needs are being met. Placement plans are child-centred and the involvement of the young person in all aspects of their care has seen sustained progress in all areas of their lives. A social worker commented: 'The staff team at [Name] were supportive both prior to [Name's] placement and during transition. They were motivated, excited and passionate about getting to know [Name], understood her history and developed the right support and care plans to ensure a successful placement. Multi-agency working is excellent.'

Life story work and the completion of journals are key components that ensure that the young person takes with them positive memories, achievements and unforgettable times that would otherwise be lost if not recorded. There are pictures and memorabilia around the home reminding the young people of their fun times and special memories that capture an atmosphere of homeliness and inclusivity. Bedrooms are highly personalised with family photos and certificates of achievements are on display.

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

The young people are kept safe and protected. They trust the adults who look after them and will share with them any worries or anxieties and disclosures, with the knowledge that it will be believed, taken seriously and acted upon. Interactions between the young people, staff and the manager are relaxed and tactile, with lots of hugs and joviality. Staff are highly skilled and confident in what they do within an environment of transparency and openness. This is testament to the quality of the relationships that have been established with the young people. Staff are able to predict behaviours and often pre-empt a change in mood, taking measures to minimise incidents of, for example, self-harm. As one young person said: 'All the staff keep you safe. When you feel down and really upset, they are there for you.'

Comprehensive behaviour management plans detail all aspects of the young people's vulnerabilities and risks. They are robust and regularly reviewed. The young people are consulted and have input into their plans, which increases their understanding of why certain measures are put in place. Key-work sessions focus on presenting behaviours and are often addressed shortly after an incident. The young people are encouraged to express themselves and articulate their feelings. As one young person said: 'I can tell [manager] anything. She will always listen. If I have done something wrong, it is spoken about, dealt with and forgotten.'

High staff ratios at key times, and appropriate restrictions, greatly minimise opportunities for young people to engage in harmful behaviours or go missing from the home. There has been one episode of going missing since the last inspection and this was extremely short due to staff's diligent and prompt action. Incidents of self-harm have significantly reduced. In exceptional circumstances, staff will complete room searches if they believe a young person is in crisis and at risk of harming themselves. This is appropriately recorded and when appropriate with the young person's permission. The manager is

very clear that she will take all measures to safeguard and protect the young people in her care.

Admissions to the home are undertaken through a vigorous and thorough referral process that ensures that the home is equipped to meet young people's needs and manage any identified risks. It is only recently that two young people have been admitted to the home following a substantial period where there have been only two young people resident at the home. The manager is extremely mindful of the need to assess the compatibility with the young people already in placement. The young people have the opportunity to become familiar with the home and the staff through a highly individualised introduction process. As one social worker said: 'The manager and staff are extremely child-centred, they apply careful matching considerations and implement early planning in their management of any difficulties.'

The employment of staff is thorough and robust. Safe recruitment practices and vetting procedures endeavour to employ individuals that possess qualities, skills and experience that will enhance the lives of the young people and improve outcomes. Staff are provided with opportunities to further their knowledge base through mandatory and bespoke training. Each member of staff has a development plan that promotes continuous professional learning. A professional said: 'I have worked with the home for a long time. I am really impressed with the range of skills the staff and manager utilise in their care and protection of the young people.'

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The registered manager fulfils her role to a high standard. She has extensive experience, is suitably qualified and is a visual manager who remains very 'hands on' with the young people in her care. The manager understands each of the young people in her care and what their needs, risks and vulnerabilities are. She is passionate and aspirational in her role and is on a continuous journey to ensure that the young people achieve the best possible outcomes.

The manager leads by example. Her transparent approach and strong commitment to improving the quality of care are underpinned by an enthusiastic and committed staff team. As one member of staff commented: 'I feel very well supported by [Manager], I have known her a long time and we have a very open dialogue. We complement each other. I also get support from the company and staff team. It's about working together.' Reflective and purposeful supervision takes place for all staff that has not only seen staff progress developmentally but has embraced their emotional well-being, which has enabled them to deliver consistently high-quality care.

The consistency and stability of the staff team and the longevity of the registered manager contribute to the positive outcomes for the young people. Effective and excellent relationships and communication forums that are well established with partner agencies ensure that young people are appropriately safeguarded and receive holistic care. The manager and staff are innovative in their approach and are not averse to challenging, for example, educational providers and the virtual school when decisions

have been made that are not felt to be in the best interests of the young person.

The manager has been instrumental and proactive in utilising the resources within the home to facilitate a measured and supported independence plan for young people transitioning from the home when they leave care. Young people have the opportunity to move into a taster flat as a step down approach from care to independence. Early consultation with leaving care services is given high priority to ensure that for one young person plans are agreed and progressed in a timely manner that promotes continuity of care and minimises any unnecessary anxieties for the young person. The young person enthusiastically said: 'I am really excited about moving into the taster flat next year. It's a stepping stone to moving into my own accommodation when I am 18.'

The manager is highly conscientious in keeping abreast with monitoring and auditing of the home's internal processes, which contribute to the safety and well-being of the young people. Stakeholder feedback, attendance at quarterly local authority provider meetings, comments from surveys and other consultation processes are used to evaluate, influence and review the effectiveness 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:** SC471178

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Dove Adolescent Services Limited

**Registered provider address:** 170 Southgate, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF8 1QJ

**Responsible individual:** Barbara Whittaker

**Registered manager:** Stacy Cooper

## **Inspector**

Cath Sikakana: social care inspector

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