

Children's homes – interim inspection

Inspection date	25/04/2016
Unique reference number	SC472164
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Amegreen Children's Services Limited
Registered person address	2 Granary Court, Fair Oak Green, Stratfield Saye, Reading RG7 2DL

Responsible individual	Gary Carlin
Registered manager	Adam Law
Inspector	Chris Peel

Inspection date	25/04/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has improved effectiveness. Leaders and managers have done much to embed the ethos of the home, as described in the statement of purpose, into the practice of the home. A stable workforce means that regular training on developmental trauma is leading to a greater understanding of its impact on the lives of children and young people and of how adults can help them to overcome it. Although some staff are more confident than others, there is strong evidence of the approach being used to inform planning and practice. This is demonstrated most clearly in the child and adolescent needs and strengths assessments now made of each resident. These documents provide an understanding of how early experiences have affected the lives of each child or young person, and of how maladaptive coping strategies may have developed. Authors establish broad aims for addressing problematic behaviours arising and the strategies that are likely to be effective in doing so. A scoring system allows progress to be tracked. The assessments lead to placement and behaviour management plans that carry the ethos into specific objectives and approaches to be used. Significant progress is being shown by children and young people, most of whom are able to regulate their emotional states much better than when they first came to the home. This is demonstrated through the reduced use of sanctions and physical interventions. In addition, a young person for whom times of family celebration have been a trigger for a troubled state of mind and consequent disruptive behaviours has come through a period of his birthday and Christmas without serious incident. Increasing emotional stability, in turn, allows children and young people to progress in other areas of their lives, including independent living skills, interest in and enjoyment of social activities with peers, and education. Consequently, one is now successfully cooking for himself most days of the week, most are able to spend time unsupervised in the community, all are attending a club of their choosing and most are managing and making headway in full-time education. Progress is slow for some children and young people and not smooth for any, but staff respond confidently to challenges and relate positively to children and young	

people when they reject the care being offered to them. An excellent example was letters from a key worker to a young person, written with obvious thoughtfulness, plenty of encouragement and careful explanation of issues. Staff are supported by regular individual and group supervision sessions, which allow them to explore concerns about particular children and young people and the emotional impact of the work.

The manager and staff have positive relationships with other professionals involved in the care of children and young people. This includes liaison with them and contributing to relevant plans. There is evidence of challenge to practice that is not meeting children's and young people's needs, particularly where decision making is slow, delaying adequate provision. Considerable effort has been made by staff to identify suitable resources, such as therapists and social activities for children and young people. Advocates have been brought in to help children and young people to have their voices heard when they are concerned about plans being made.

Leaders and managers do not have constructive links with all other bodies and organisations that have responsibilities towards young people particularly the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. Improving this could assist with training, developing protocols that fit better with local procedures, and making useful connections.

The manager actively promotes a culture of children and young people contributing to decision making, including choosing the colour of the paint being used to decorate on the day of the inspection. House meetings tend not to be held with all children and young people present at the same time, because of difficult group dynamics. One young person commented on this saying, 'Staff say you have to have meetings so there is consistency, but there are no meetings so where is the consistency?' Records are made of meetings with one or two residents, and these tend to be about specific issues, but without them all regularly getting together opportunities for contributing and learning about the process of negotiation are missed. Consequently, one young person said that he did not know that the colours of paint were being chosen and was unable to make a suggestion.

In other ways, the manager is demonstrating to individual children and young people that their views are important, for example, by treating critical comments as complaints, addressing the issues promptly, responding to them in writing and recording them as such. A wishes and feelings box, complete with pens and card, provides another way of showing that views are welcome.

Requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been positively responded to, although evidencing all timescales for behaviour management interventions is still not clear, so the requirement has been restated. Occasionally, a sanction is not proportionate or restorative in nature. The manager is aware and may have spoken to the staff member involved, but has not written a comment to this effect in the log.

A risk assessment for bedroom door alarms is now in place for each child and young person. There is a commitment from the provider to ensure that their use is

proportionate, and the manager is aware of the potential for staff, accustomed to the use of alarms, being risk averse in making the assessments.

Perusal of files shows that safer recruitment policies are being followed, so that only those believed to be safe come to work in the home. One member of staff has not achieved the level 3 qualification required of residential workers within two years of being appointed. However, there are extenuating circumstances, and the person's practice gives no cause for concern. A plan is in place for the course to be completed within a reasonable timeframe.

Mandatory training for staff has been widened to cover child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, and equality and diversity. This is part of the ethos of recruiting staff who show an aptitude and ability to work in this field and to further skill them so that they are able to provide a high quality of care.

Information about this children's home

This privately owned service accommodates up to four children or young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The home uses 'systems-centered' methods of working with children and young people who have experienced developmental trauma. It has access to equine therapy with the organisation's own horses.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/11/2015	CH - Full	Good
22/07/2015	CH - Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/03/2015	CH - Full	Good
14/01/2015	CH - Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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 persons meet 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 persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that a record is made within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint; within 48 hours that the user has been spoken to about the measure, and signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and that within 5 days an addition is made to the record that the child has been spoken to about the measure. In particular, records must show that these timescales have been adhered to (Regulation 35(3)(a-c)).	27/05/2016

Recommendations

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

- The home should take the initiative in identifying others, including Local Safeguarding Children Boards, who must play a part for their children and engage with those relevant people proactively, advocating for the children in their care ('Guide to Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 12, para 2.7).

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection, we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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