

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	21/10/2015
Unique reference number	SC475697
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Stephen Brown
Inspector	Jackie Line

Previous inspection date	05/03/2015
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

SC475697

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people benefit from a range of social and recreational opportunities. As a result, they develop relationships, learn new skills, build confidence, and have fun!
- Staff help young people to manage complex contact arrangements safely, enabling them to keep in touch with people who are important to them.
- Young people understand how they are benefitting from the support and care provided, and can identify areas where they are making progress. For example, young people say they are less angry, and do not go missing from home as often as they once did.
- In-house therapeutic support is available on site; young people make good use of this enabling them to address past experiences as well as current concerns. This promotes and improves their emotional well-being.
- Educational attendance is excellent, and this supports young people's learning and life chances. Transitions to college are well managed ensuring young people are supported in adjusting to a new learning environment.
- Relationships between staff and young people are largely positive and reciprocal.
- The staff team has been strengthened with people who bring fresh ideas, creativity, and diverse experiences in working with young people.
- Leaders and managers have an excellent understanding of the home's progression between inspections. They are aware of strengths and areas for development. A clear development plan is in place; this is child focused and demonstrates a commitment to achieving improved outcomes.
- Managers work hard with staff to learn lessons from challenging situations in order to develop practice and improve the quality and standard of care.
- Risks are clearly identified, understood, and managed; concerns are responded to promptly ensuring young people's safety and welfare is promoted.
- Young people live in a homely environment, which is well resourced and maintained.

To continue to improve the home needs to:

- Evaluate education reports so that academic progress is more clearly understood by managers and staff.
- Review placement plans where necessary to ensure young people's ethnicity, culture and religion are clearly identified. Furthermore, ensure they include information about how such needs are being met in order to fully promote their identity.
- Monitor disciplinary measures more consistently to ensure they are always fair and proportionate.
- Update the location risk assessment to reflect environmental hazards within the locality.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- Ensure the registered person provides care which meets each child's needs and promotes their welfare, taking into account of the child's religion, ethnicity, and cultural background, their assessed needs, previous experiences and any relevant plans (The guide to the quality standards page 14, paragraph 3.2)
- Ensure all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair and the principles as set out in paragraph 9.35 are respected (The guide to the quality standards page 46 paragraph 9.36)
- Ensure the registered person oversees the welfare of the children in their care through observation and engagement with teachers, specifically so that children's academic progress and achievements from their starting points are clearly understood (The guide to the quality standards page 54, paragraph 10.23)
- Ensure the registered person reviews the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these (The guide to the quality standards page 64, paragraph 15.1).

Full report

Information about this children's home

A private organisation operates this children's home. The service is registered to accommodate up to seven young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities. Their education is provided as day pupils in two schools on the company's other sites.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
25/07/2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Young people are registered with relevant health services and they confirm they are supported to attend routine and specialist appointments. Staff link in well with the looked after children's nurse to ensure young people's particular needs are met. For example, her intervention helped to facilitate a smooth transition to local child and adolescent mental health services for those new to the home. Consequently, young people's physical and emotional health needs are well met. Easy and regular access to the organisation's therapist and psychology service means young people receive help to come to terms with issues such as separation and loss. The therapy team also provides support and guidance to staff, enabling them to reflect on and understand the reasons for young people's presenting behaviour. Furthermore, both work collaboratively with them to look at strategies to manage this. As a result, young people are beginning to develop their own coping mechanisms, and this prevents potentially challenging situations from escalating. Staff spend time with young people, and this is a priority for them. Levels of support and supervision are tailored accordingly, providing good levels of individualised care. In the main practice is underpinned by comprehensive placement plans that are regularly reviewed. Young people contribute to these, and consequently are involved in decisions about their day to day lives and any review of their progress. One placement plan does not include enough information about a child's religious, ethnic, and cultural needs, and how these are being met. Consequently, this young person is not being fully supported with issues pertaining to his identity. Young people receive care from staff who are committed, energetic, enthusiastic, and creative. Consequently, they are supported to engage in a wide range of leisure activities including geocaching, fishing, rugby, football, 'bowling with a twist', arts and crafts, board games, cooking and baking, trips to the beach, museums, and theme parks. A great time was had in the summer on the homemade water slide in the garden! Similarly, much fun was had by staff and young people alike at a recent Caribbean evening, with a steel band providing the entertainment and opportunities to join in. As a result, young people enjoy different experiences, develop improved relationships with peers and staff, learn new skills, and build confidence.	

All young people have excellent school attendance. Education reports are available and provide information on young people's attitude to learning, levels of engagement, achievements and attainment. This information is not fully evaluated. Consequently, managers cannot clearly articulate what measurable academic progress young people have made from their starting points, and as they journey through their education.

Young people are helped to prepare for independence. They help around the home, can do their own washing, budget, shop and prepare meals, as well as travel independently. This means young people are learning new skills and responsibilities in line with their age and development that over time will assist in their transition to adult life.

Young people maintain contact with people that are important to them and where this is part of their care plan. Arrangements can be complex, and staff are sensitive to this. Appropriate support is in place to ensure that contact is as safe and positive an experience as possible. Staff advocate for young people; on occasion this has led to a change in venue and location more suited to their needs, and that of their families.

Consultation with young people is done individually and collectively through key work sessions, and young people's meetings. They positively engage in these forums, and as a result their opinions influence the day to day running of the home. A new corner sofa has been purchased reflecting what young people wanted, they contribute to menu and activity planning, and they have provided input into the recruitment of staff by giving their views about what qualities they would like to see in any new staff appointed to the home.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Young people say they feel safe, and can identify a trusted adult they can talk to inside or outside of the home, should they have any concerns. Young people know how to complain and are confident that when they do, this will be looked into properly. Any complaints that are made and well recorded, leaving a clear audit trail of actions taken and the outcome. The selection and recruitment of staff is rigorous and prevents unsuitable adults from being able to work with young people. Staff spoken with during the inspection demonstrated a clear understanding about child protection procedures	

and reporting concerns. Social workers and independent reviewing officers report good levels of communication with managers and staff, and as such are well informed about progress and challenges experienced by young people. Clarity about roles and responsibilities, together with good information sharing promotes young people's safety and welfare.

Most young people do not go missing, and when episodes do occur clear plans are in place to respond to these effectively. Records indicate that staff take prompt action and are persistent in their efforts to ensure a safe return. Individual risk assessments for those who do go missing are shared with police. This provides them with a better understanding of why staff consider them to be high risk in some cases, and they are able to adjust their response accordingly. Staff understand the triggers for young people going missing, and work together with them, their parents, and the placing authority to minimise and manage associated risks. As a result, incidents are reducing and as one young person explained, 'I do not go missing as much now that I live here'.

Young people rarely get involved in risky behaviour such as criminality, taking drugs or drinking alcohol. When incidents do happen staff respond quickly. For example, when a young person experimented with taking legal highs, and another admitted to taking drugs when missing from home, a specialist worker came into the home to give a talk to young people and staff about the dangers of such behaviour. Such action helps to educate young people, enables them to make more informed choices and keep safe.

Young people report that staff help them to manage their behaviour more appropriately, and that they have made progress in this area. For example, one young person says, 'I am less angry than when I first came'. Individual support plans are in place, and young people contribute to these outlining helpful strategies to prevent behaviours from escalating. On the occasions this does happen, physical intervention is sometimes necessary. Incidents are well managed, and records are up to date. Young people always have the opportunity to talk through incidents with someone not involved, and monitoring of restraint is effective so that any patterns and trends can be identified and addressed.

Efforts are being made to change the culture and ethos in the home, and staff involve young people in discussions about what makes an effective consequence. Although they recognise this, young people still say not all consequences are fair. They particularly dislike the imposition of seventy-two hours close supervision, which involves increased support from staff and home based activities for the duration. Young people perceive they are made to spend time in their rooms, and whilst records do not reflect this, their perception is compromising their experience of living in the home. The monitoring and review of disciplinary measures is not consistent to ensure fairness and proportionality in all cases, and a

recommendation is raised to address this.

Timely external and internal health and safety checks take place to ensure a safe physical environment is maintained. Young people participate in regular fire evacuation drills, and so know what to do in the event of such an emergency. The local area risk assessment is in place but it does not account for all environmental factors close by. This is identified as an area for improvement to ensure that all risks in the locality are identified, and strategies for keeping safe are shared with young people.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
The manager has been in post since October 2014, and was registered with Ofsted in January 2015. He is suitably qualified and experienced, holding a level 4 Registered Manager's Award. In addition, he has recently completed a Level 5 Diploma in Leadership of Care Services for Children and Young people. This is currently subject to external verification. The home is effectively run with the new leadership team bringing about some significant changes since their arrival. The ethos of the home is now one of care and support, moving away from behaviour management. Increasingly, the focus is on building positive relationships; this has been a critical ingredient in keeping young people safe, and improving their behaviour and experiences over the last year. The actions of leaders and managers means this home demonstrates a good capacity to improve based on previous Ofsted judgements, and developments between inspections. A clear commitment to learning lessons from significant events ensures practice continues to develop, and this improves the quality and standard of care afforded to young people. For example, post incident briefings help identify things that could have been done differently. Furthermore, the team received input from a speech and language therapist about the communication needs of each young person This is informing practice particularly when supporting them at times of crisis. Improvements between inspections mean quality assurance reports reach Ofsted in a timely manner. The Registered Manager uses monitoring processes to identify and address shortfalls. He recognises the strengths and needs of the service, and this informs developmental priorities moving forward. A clear plan is in place	

reflecting these, representing a real commitment to improvement and raising standards.

The Registered Manager is a child-focused individual who provides direction, supervision, and support to his staff. They describe both the Registered Manager and his deputy as 'approachable and accessible', meaning they are confident in raising issues in the knowledge they will be addressed. New staff receive a good induction, and are well prepared for the role. All staff receive an appraisal at least annually, consequently their performance is reviewed, and this supports their development.

Staff are positive about the range of training courses they have access to. One member of staff says, 'the company is one of the best I have worked with when it comes to training'. As a result, staff are fully equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to meet the individual needs of young people. Staff are able to articulate how training informs their practice. For example, a recent training course on child sexual exploitation made staff more aware of, and alert to, the risks and vulnerabilities to young men as well as young women.

Changes to the staff team are welcome; new staff bring a range of experiences, skills, creative thinking, and fresh ideas. Such additions bring a greater balance to the team and are helping to take the home forward and improve. Furthermore, young people benefit from the enthusiasm, energy, and creativity they offer.

The physical environment in which young people live is largely excellent. Photographs on display reflect the good times they have and contributes to it having a homey feel. Managers invest in good quality furnishings, and together with staff work hard to ensure the home is well maintained.

Appropriate systems are in place to notify Ofsted and other relevant persons of significant events that occur. This ensures that people are kept informed, and means young people's welfare is promoted.

Two requirements made at the last inspection have been met. Four recommendations are raised at this inspection to secure further improvement where required.

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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