

SC480850

Registered provider: Hexagon Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is owned and operated by a private provider.

Inspection dates: 12 to 13 September 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 17 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:

- Young people make exceptional progress due to the care that they receive from the highly dedicated and experienced staff team.
- The quality of relationships between staff and young people is excellent, resulting in the development of secure, trusting attachments.
- Staff are aspirational for young people, who achieve academic success due to their encouragement, support that they receive and collaborative working with educational professionals.
- Young people enjoy living in the home and benefit from a strong sense of security and stability.
- There has been a significant reduction in negative behaviours. Staff reinforce positive behaviour and use preventative and restorative practices.
- Staff work collaboratively with other safeguarding agencies to provide a multi-agency approach to safeguard young people.
- Robust risk management and staff's persistence have resulted in a significant reduction in young people's missing from home episodes.
- There is strong, effective management of the home. A strong focus on staff's professional development and training means that young people receive an exceptionally high standard of care from staff, who have high aspirations for them.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Provide clarity to staff in relation to timescales for when to escalate matters further, if other professionals not respond to requests for action.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
10/08/2016	Full	Good
20/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
17/07/2015	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- Where the placing authority or another relevant person does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, the home must challenge them to meet the child's needs (see regulations 5(c)). Staff should act as champions for their children, expecting nothing less than a good parent would. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)

Specifically, in respect of completing an escalation policy to provide timescales for staff to raise matters further, saving time in sending repeated emails.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people receive excellent, highly effective, warm and nurturing care from a team of dedicated staff who have extensive experience of caring for young people. Staff understand the complexity of young people's past experiences. Well-planned and structured key-working sessions cover a wide range of topics. Staff use a wealth of literature and worksheets, providing young people with information and advice in an easy to understand format. The highly intuitive and caring staff help young people to open up and talk about their emotions. One young person spoke of his life being transformed because of the care provided and how a staff member 'helped me to be able to trust people in the way I do now'.

Young people flourish and benefit from living at a home where staff genuinely care about them and are determined to help them to succeed. Staff know the young people exceptionally well. Highly individualised and exemplary care planning impacts positively on young people. This includes improvements in behaviour, self-esteem, social interactions and school attendance. Young people's records demonstrate a clear measure of the sustained progress that they make. A professional said: 'I could never imagine (name of young person) moving on. He didn't have the skills. He didn't have the confidence, but the consistency of staff and continuity this offered really helped.'

Young people's education is a high priority for the manager and staff, who have established good links with local schools, careers advisors and the virtual school. Consequently, young people quickly obtain a school placement, which helps them to establish good routines. Young people have increased attendance at school and college due to staff's high levels of support and encouragement. The young people sit their exams and achieve academic success. This includes those who have a long history of non-school attendance. An education professional said: 'The manager and staff have high aspirations for young people and know the need to support them educationally. We

have built up professional trust and have all learned from each other.'

Young people have a weekly planner that gives them structure and routine, as well as free time. Staff engage young people in a wide range of social and recreational activities to help to keep them fit. The manager has 'gone the extra mile' for one young person, whose wish to have an overseas holiday was fulfilled. This is in recognition of his exceptional progress and achievements.

Staff are highly instrumental in forming links and building excellent relationships with family members. In situations of severed contact, staff help young people to re-establish this, allowing them to maintain important links with relatives and those important to them. Young people enjoy living at the home and have lived here for many years. Consequently, they benefit from a strong sense of security and stability. Redecoration of the home has made it feel warm, colourful and cosy. Young people spend more time here with staff and their peers. They no longer cause physical damage, and they develop a sense of belonging to and ownership of their home. One parent said: 'The home has a lovely, homely environment where the staff are incredibly patient, understanding, supportive and caring for both my child and myself.'

Young people benefit from moving into a taster flat in preparation to moving on from the home. This provides them with the opportunity to test whether they are ready to move on to independent accommodation and prepares them for future challenges involved with living alone. Staff talk of their pleasure in seeing young people develop into confident young adults who enjoy returning to show staff their achievements since leaving. One ex-resident said: 'All the staff are great and support me when I need them.'

Young people give their views in a number of forums and have a voice to make decisions about their future. In addition to independent visitors, staff strongly advocate for young people and rigorously challenge the placing authority. Staff would benefit from an escalation policy with guidance on timescales for raising matters further. This would help them to achieve quicker outcomes for young people, rather than sending repeated emails.

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

One of the strengths of the staff team is the strong safeguarding culture, with excellent risk management. Staff consistently follow the approaches in the detailed, individualised risk assessments that identify young people's specific vulnerabilities. Staff regularly review these plans, which the manager audits to ensure that they remain up to date. Staff provide a range of information and advice to young people, who learn from their own mistakes as part of growing up, experimenting and becoming independent. Staff are highly committed and work hard, investing time and effort in making sure that young people are kept safe. A professional said: 'Staff have put in a lot of work. They have come to solutions and compromises. Systems are in place to keep young people safe.'

The manager has changed the ethos of the home through encouraging the reinforcement of positive behaviour, rather than enforcing sanctions. Comprehensive and

individualised behavioural management plans identify clear strategies for staff to help to minimise negative behaviours. An example is that smoking and alcohol and substance misuse are actively discouraged and young people's usage has reduced significantly. Young people respond well to the instant rewards that provide a form of celebration of their achievements. The cohesive team of staff consistently promote appropriate social behaviours, acting as good role models. Preventative and restorative practice helps young people to develop more awareness of the consequences of their actions. As a result, young people use alternative, positive and socially acceptable methods to display their negative feelings.

Staff are consistent and monitor the effectiveness of their de-escalation skills and intervention. There has been a marked improvement in young people's behaviour and fewer negative outbursts. Restraints are rarely used, and formal intervention by the police is infrequent. This prevents young people from being unduly criminalised. Young people begin to make their own positive choices regarding education, work and behaviour. One young person said: 'I've calmed down since I've come to live here. I haven't been arrested in a long time and have forgotten what it's like to be arrested.'

Staff take decisive action when they consider that young people may be at risk, working closely and in collaboration with the placing authority and police. The proactive staff attend vulnerable assessment team meetings to develop better risk management strategies, given their concerns about child sexual exploitation for one young person. This proactive approach provides a multi-agency approach to safeguard young people at an early stage.

Staff's proactivity and persistence have resulted in a significant reduction in young people's missing from home episodes. Although one young person still goes missing from the home, staff work collaboratively with the police, missing from care coordinator, youth offending worker and independent return interviewer. Plans to manage this young person's missing incidents are robust, comprehensive and drawn up in partnership with other agencies. Staff obtain intelligence about young people's associates and the places that they visit. They also go to great lengths to locate absent young people, and have been very effective in reducing the risk to young people when they are missing.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager has worked in residential care for 17 years, including in managerial roles. She has extensive experience and is suitably qualified, as well as holding a social work degree. She has worked at the home for many years and has been in post since June 2015. The manager keeps up-to-date with new guidelines and current issues. She is a member of different forums, discussing relevant issues such as sexually harmful behaviours and the 'Staying close' programme for children leaving residential care. She contributes to discussions and imparts her knowledge and experience to make a difference to policy decisions for young people at a local level.

The manager has made many positive changes and improvements since her appointment. She is well organised, provides strong leadership and is highly effective in

running the home. She is child centred and motivates staff to achieve excellent outcomes for young people. As an exemplary role model, the manager mentors new managers at the company's sister homes to help others to make improvements for young people.

The manager and staff team are enthusiastic, passionate and committed. The manager has high expectations of the staff team, leading by example. She knows the young people extremely well and maintains a thorough, effective oversight of their behaviour, needs and progress. There is regular consultation with stakeholders and young people. Staff respect and understand young people's different cultures and values. The independent visitor monitors the service thoroughly, routinely noting areas of improvement and providing independent scrutiny of the home. This helps the manager to evaluate the service through the quality of care review, which is insightful and identifies clear objectives to make improvements. The manager demonstrates a good understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses.

Improved recruitment and induction procedures, alongside a comprehensive, good-quality training package, keep staff skilled and motivated. The manager understands how staff's professional development is essential to ensure that they continue to deliver exceptionally high standards of care to young people. When young people present with specific issues such as bereavement, bespoke training provides staff with the necessary knowledge base and skills to support them. External professionals attend staff's team meetings to provide up-to-date information and advice. The manager identifies staff's individual skills and talents and gives them specific roles, such as 'education champion', to provide further in-house specialist knowledge and training. Staff implement research-based practice and learning from their training to improve outcomes.

High-quality, regular supervision gives staff the opportunity to reflect on their practice individually and together with colleagues in team meetings as a means to improve practice.

Since being in post, the manager has developed excellent partnership working and communication between the service and other agencies, in particular with schools and police. Young people benefit from the close working links to provide multi-agency working to address their holistic needs. One professional said: 'There is good joined-up working and good relationships, which have improved over the last few years.'

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 difference 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: SC480850

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hexagon Care Services Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 1 Tustin Court, Riversway, Preston PR2 2YQ

Responsible individual: Kenneth Croll

Registered manager: Karen Brooksbank

Inspector

Tina Ruffles, social care inspector

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