

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	17/07/2015
Unique reference number	SC480850
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Hexagon Care Services Limited
Registered person address	2nd Floor, Unit 1 Tustin Court, Riversway, Preston, PR2 2YQ

Responsible individual	Mr Kenneth Croll
Registered manager	Ms Karen Brooksbank
Inspector	Mrs Michele Hargan

Inspection date	17/07/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Not previously inspected
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

SC480850

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Staff share a positive understanding about how to effectively earn the trust of young people. They are consistent in their approach and they take meaningful action to progress issues that benefit young people.
- Staff know how to protect young people and help them progress by establishing agreed routines, structure and clear expectations. They are highly skilled at working with young people's families and have good working relationships with professionals.
- Leadership is strong and staff receive good support. They receive specialist training reflecting young people's needs leading to improved experiences and outcomes.

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

- The Statement of Purpose does not outline how young people are monitored when they leave and return to the home. Young people's case records are not retained by the registered provider after they no longer live at the home.
- Reports compiled for reviews of young people's care plans are not written for the primary benefit of young people. The home needs new carpets in some young people's bedrooms and hallways.

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
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 16(1)) A description of the home's approach to monitoring and surveillance of children (Schedule 1, 16) In particular, include information about how sensors on the front door are used.	25/09/2015
Case records must be kept— (d) in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 36(2)(d)) In particular, the child's case records are to be retained by the registered person.	25/09/2015

Recommendations

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

- The importance of understanding who we are and where we come from is recognised in good social work practice, for example through undertaking life story work or other direct work. Staff in children's homes should play a full part in this kind. In particular, reports for review of young people care plans need to be written to aid their understanding about their overall life and time within the

home (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 16 paragraph 3.14)

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive home environments that meet the needs of children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislation (alarm, food hygiene etc.); however in doing so homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutionalised' impression. In particular, ensure that carpets in young people's bedrooms and throughout the home are of a domestic type (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 15 paragraph 3.9)
- Children should be actively encouraged to read their records and to add further information to them. They should be regularly reminded of their rights to see information kept about them and be given information about how they might be supported to access their records in later life (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 62 paragraph 14.6)
- Staff must also be familiar with information sharing requirements relating to the children they care for. They should have access to the information sharing policy and procedures specified by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) for the area where the home is located. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 62 paragraph 14.7)

Full report

Information about this children's home

- The home provides care and accommodation for up to six children with emotional and or behavioural difficulties (EBD). The home is owned by a private provider.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
First inspection since registration		

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Staff build meaningful relationships with young people by providing them with structured activities and good levels of supervision. They are also nurturing, consistent and persistent in their approach. A young person said, 'It's a very good home, it's a home not a care home. I don't really have any issues.' Also, about living at the home another young person said, 'I enjoy my life, its good.' Staff ensure young people know how to raise any concerns and these are addressed and taken seriously. A system is in place so that when necessary a person independent of the home can investigate matters. Outcomes of complaints are available to social workers to further young people's understanding about how decisions are reached. This approach respects young people's rights and builds trust. Young people's school attendance and educational attainment has improved, taking into account their starting point. A young person said, 'They sorted me out, getting up and going to school on time.' About a young person's education timetable a social worker said, 'He's not quite on a full timetable he will move onto to this next year.' Staff raise concerns with education colleagues if they consider a young person's schooling is being disadvantaged for whatever reason. This approach improves young people's life chances in adulthood. Staff provide support to young people to take part in activities and pastimes of interest to them. A member of staff said, 'We really listened to what a parent said about not taking young people out on activities they can't afford to do, we do activities in the countryside that don't cost very much and young people like these best.' Another member of staff said, 'Young people are always out seeing friends or family and doing things.' A young person said, 'Last year I went to France, this year I'm going to Ireland.' Young people's confidence and relationships skills improve because they learn that their welfare and safety is the main focus for staff. Staff said, 'I think it is important to stay calm and reassure young people that whatever happens we can keep them safe.' Staff help young people learn how to manage difficult feelings and build their ability to self-reflect. As a result, young people become more relaxed and relationships with others, including their families, improves. Young people feel acceptance from staff because they effectively communicate to young people that they understand them. Staff receive training in specialist areas furthering their knowledge of how to help young people and keep them safe. A	

member of staff said, 'The training at times is wonderful, the people that do it have been Registered Managers. They understand young people, and we got training in radicalisation.' This means staff can broach sensitive issues confidently with young people who learn over time they can talk to staff openly too.

It is abundantly clear that staff treat young people with dignity and respect. They are particularly sensitive to the vulnerabilities of young people for example, when a young person is newly admitted. Staff said, 'We don't want to overwhelm young people with lots of paperwork and information.' They also take into account the effect of any changes for the existing group of young people at such times. Another member of staff said, 'We complete an impact assessment before a young person is admitted.' This approach allays young people's anxieties and means those living and moving into the home experience the least disruption possible.

Staff are sensitive to the cultural and developmental needs of young people, supporting them to adjust to transitions caused through separation and loss. They understand the impact of this and they know how to help young people build feelings belonging and security. A young person previously living at the home said, 'They helped me find my family...it made me know about my life.' As a result, young people find out more about their unique family history, helping establish family ties. Staff take swift action to pass on concerns where young people are subject to online criminal treatment by others. This type of action builds trust with staff helping young people feel safe.

Staff are clear that contact primarily needs to be in young people's best interests and this is the basis on which they manage such arrangements. All parents consulted during the inspection were very positive about the care their children received and the support they themselves experienced. Parents identified the level of care their children received as the major factor in improving the relationships between them and their children. A parent said, 'Since he has been here, he has learnt to think more.' Another parent said, 'He has come on in leaps and bounds, he knows we are all singing from the same hymn sheet.'

Young people receive effective support with their health and wellbeing, including routine checks with Opticians, Dentist and GPs. When further follow up is necessary parents are encouraged to accompany their children with support from staff. This way of working improves the emotional and physical wellbeing of young people. Also, a mental health professional described staff as, 'highly dedicated and skilled....communication is very good. They approach me appropriately when required.' This type of effective joint working significantly benefits the emotional and physical wellbeing of young people.

There is a culture within the home of routinely recognising and rewarding young people achievements. A significant aspect of this is focussing on what is positive about their behaviour. For example, one member of staff said, 'A young person asked me about earning an incentive. I wanted to keep on making sure he was

coming back to the home on time. He said "but I'm already doing that," I said I know, and I want to make sure you keep it up.' This approach helps young people recognise the choices available to them and improves their self-esteem and confidence.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Staff know how to help vulnerable young people reduce behaviours that can place them at risk and in most instances these behaviours reduce. They work effectively with other professionals such as the police and independent reviewing officer. They are proactive in seeking the views of the local authority designated officer (LADO) for advice and guidance. A police officer said, 'I met the manager about the joint protocol for young people who go missing from care, we generally have a very positive working relationship.' This means staff understand what to do alongside other professionals in the best interests of young people. Where a young person's behaviour is an expression of an intention to disrupt their placement they talk openly about this with them. In addition, they also work with the placing authority to address the concerns. This approach enables shared care planning by all those involved and for the young people to be appropriately involved in decisions affecting them. Staff use a research based tool to establish a more detailed understanding of young people's risk taking behaviour in consultation with social workers. The information obtained informs individual plans about what staff must do to reduce any risk. This approach improves young people's awareness and understanding of how to stay safe and why. A member of staff said, 'The tool comes with resources we can use to help young people for example, within key-worker sessions, focussing on a particular area and we can measure improvements in young people's behaviour.' Young people are clear what is expected of them, including boundaries and the consequences of any challenging behaviour. Young people learn what it feels like to be safe and that staff are trustworthy. This leads to improvements in their behaviour. Reflecting on a consequence, a young person, 'Well I'm not going to break anything again.' A member of staff said, 'We don't like to punish young people, we give them an opportunity to earn the consequence back.' Also, staff said, 'Consequences have gone down a lot because we try to reinforce positive behaviour.' Staff hardly ever use physical intervention as young people's behaviour does not warrant this. A senior member of staff said, 'We tell young people we are not going	

to restrain them and that we would only ever do this as a last resort to keep them safe', and, 'I think young people can really test us sometimes just to find out if we really mean what we say.' A young person said, 'I've never seen anyone be restrained.' A mental health professional said, 'The atmosphere within the home is always warm, positive and welcoming.' As a result, young people find other ways of expressing themselves and learn they can make choices about how to deal with difficult feelings.

Young people live in a large home purpose built some years ago and because of this there is a somewhat institutionalised aspect to parts of the home. For example, office type carpeting in areas including some young people's bedrooms. This detracts from the obvious efforts by staff and young people to personalise their surroundings. The décor of the home is also clearly showing signs of wear and tear. Any drift in upkeep of the home undermines relationships between staff and young people. However assurances were given that measures to address this are in hand.

The health and wellbeing of some young people is compromised because they smoke. This behaviour is permitted on the external premises of the home. Staff consider this to be the least harmful way of managing this behaviour and the associated risks. Staff are also persistent in trying to get young people to stop. They said, 'We don't like young people smoking, we try all sorts of incentives to get them to stop, smoking cessation, E-cigs, nicotine patches. They can't let their friends use the smoking area, they know they are not allowed to smoke in bedrooms. We don't provide chairs for them to sit on. We don't want them to run off last thing at night to have a cigarette.' A young person said, 'I was offered a £100 incentive to stop smoking.' As a result, young people realise just how important staff consider their current and future health to be.

Young people are cared for by staff that are carefully selected and appropriately vetted. Young people contribute to staff recruitment procedures by asking candidates questions at interview. These practices promotes the rights of young people and ensures staff are appropriate to care for them. A senior member of staff said, 'We look at any applications in line with safe recruitment practices, DBS (disclosure and barring service) and we look for gaps and check for anything untoward. We get two references, one professional, one personal and we verify these.'

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
This is the first inspection since the home was registered, moving from a different	

provider organisation. As a result, there are no outstanding requirements or recommendations relating to the home.

Changes in management arrangements do not disrupt young people's lives as these are planned for in advance. This helps reduce young people's anxieties at times of transition and ensures staff continue to feel supported.

An acting manager is in place instead of a Registered Manager who has recently left. Ofsted has received an application from the manager to register with Ofsted. The home's statement of purpose makes clear the acting manager's intention to attain the necessary qualifications. As a result, young people receive continuity of care because those in charge undertake to equip themselves with the necessary competencies.

Staff instil a sense of worth within young people aiding their development and increasing their levels of confidence. This frees young people to aspire by investing in their education, activities and relationships. A parent said, 'I didn't want him to go there, I've had to eat my words, I can't speak highly enough of the staff. He's a lot calmer.' Another parent said, 'They don't have to involve me but they do, I think it makes him feel more secure that basically everyone knows what's going on.'

Leaders and staff have effective working relationships with other professionals. Young people experience this joined up working and benefit from this as any concerns are swiftly addressed. A headteacher said, 'This is a really good home, we have good partnership working. I can't fault them in terms of education.' An independent reviewing officer said about staff's approach, 'I can't speak highly enough of them, I'm always very impressed with their knowledge of the young person.' A social worker said, 'Communication is great, a real positive is their consideration about who to admit, they gave due diligence to this for my young person.'

Leaders and the acting manager have established a 'can do' culture resulting in a highly motivated staff team. This helps young people feel safe and increases their sense of security because they know they are important to staff. Staff know how to use 'reflective practice' to aid their own strengths and weaknesses for example, within supervision and at handovers between teams. As a result, communication between staff is a meaningful process aiding understanding about how young people's underlying needs affects their daily lives.

Young people learn that the staff run the home primarily for the benefit of young people. Keeping the daily focus on young people promotes their right to a childhood. Staff provide young people with opportunities to participate in activities and experiences that help them develop and progress. This is reflected within the home's development plan which also forms part of the home's quality assurance system. A senior member of staff said, 'We canvass the views of professionals and

we forward plan positive experiences for young people, including holidays.’ Monthly visits by an independent person take place and any arising actions are responded to by the acting manager and signed off by the service manager. This effective management of staff and resources enables the home to identify areas for improvement for the benefit of young people.

Young people are only admitted to the home on the basis that all relevant information is provided about them. This means staff are clear about whether they can meet young people’s needs or not. This approach ensures that both prospective and existing young people’s needs are not compromised. A senior member of staff said, ‘If we don’t get enough information we tell the social worker we need more and we send incomplete referrals back.’

Young people’s residential plans are comprehensive and reflect their overall needs, including risk assessments and behaviour management plans. This means staff are clear about how to care for young people and what to do to keep them safe. Staff receive good support enabling them to provide good care to young people. Staff inform their care practice and staff supervision using evidence based models of social care such as ‘reflective practice’. For example, a member of staff said, ‘helping staff step back and think what could I have done differently, and, even better for the young person.’ All staff describe their experience of supervision as meaningful. This approach deepens understanding of young people’s underlying needs and improves the effectiveness of staff. A newer member of staff said, ‘I got supervision twice a month at first and then monthly.’ The increased frequency and quality of this support builds the confidence of new staff and helps staff build relationships with young people.

Young people’s confidence is increased because staff notice the progress they make, including the achievement of any developmental milestones. This helps young people learn an appropriate level of reliance on staff, freeing them up to enjoy their childhood. For example, a young person told the inspector they like making spaghetti carbonara for tea, how much they enjoy getting to see their mother and that they’re going on holiday this year.

The statement of purpose is updated when necessary and a revised version is sent to Ofsted. This document contains most of the information required by legislation aside from how door sensors are used to monitor young people entering and leaving the home. As a result, those who place young people are not fully aware of all safeguarding measures taken by the home.

Staff try not to overwhelm young people with too much information particularly at times of transition for example, when they first arrive at the home. This approach aids young people’s understanding of the home, expectations and boundaries, helping allay anxieties. A member of staff said, ‘We are working on the young people’s guide to make it loose leaved format so young people can have information given to them bit by bit.’ This helps assure that young people achieve a full understanding about the home including their rights.

Leaders and the acting manager notify Ofsted when there are significant matters affecting the protection and welfare of young people. This means Ofsted is in a position to monitor the effectiveness of any action taken by the registered person to safeguard young people.

Young people's reports for reviews of their care plans are not written first and foremost for their benefit. Discussion with staff confirmed that this information is primarily written in a format aimed at demonstrating to the care team how young people are doing. As a result, these records do not meaningfully engage young people, nor do these records increase understanding about their overall experiences and about their time living at the home.

Young people's case records are not retained within the home after they leave, nor are staff aware of their responsibilities to ensure young people understand what support is available to them in the future with accessing their record. This hampers young people's future understanding about their experiences of living in the home in the event they request this information.

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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