

SC490364

Registered provider: Blue Mountain Homes Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and registered to care for four young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 6 to 7 June 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 30 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The home is managed by strong leaders, who have high aspirations for young people.

- Staff and professionals all speak very highly of the registered manager and deputy manager.
- Several new staff have started work since the last inspection. Although the team is still developing, the good-quality care to young people has not been disrupted.
- Young people's needs are well met. There is a high emphasis on emotional needs as well as physical needs. Young people benefit from this approach because of their previous complex situations.
- Staff are kind and caring. Young people respond well to this approach.
- Young people have fewer aggressive outbursts and learn about more socially acceptable behaviour.
- Episodes of young people going missing from home reduce, and young people become safer over time. Responses when young people go missing are highly effective. Staff have an extremely resourceful approach.
- Safeguarding young people is always a top priority. Risk assessments in relation to free time, missing from home episodes, and complex risk-taking behaviour are extensive. A lot of time is invested in helping young people to be able to manage their risks safely.
- Research-based practice has started to develop, and there is scope for this to be more regularly built into care planning.
- A multi-disciplinary approach ensures that young people get the best possible advice and support.
- Young people have their say in the running of the home and in any decisions that affect them. Advocacy and children's rights services are used well to ensure that young people's views are consistently taken into consideration.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Risk assessments need to be further developed to fully capture young people's vulnerabilities when using the internet. In addition, risk assessments should be developed to consider each young person's risk of being radicalised.
- Newer staff do not all have full and extensive knowledge about young people's previous educational journey. This might hinder young people's progress because staff will not fully understand what has worked well for them in the past.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
17/05/2016	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to understand each child's education and training targets and next steps for learning. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.11)
- Ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to recognise and be alert for any signs that might indicate a child is in any way at risk of harm. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.12) This is in particular relation to risk assessments about the use of internet on mobile phones and the risk of radicalisation.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Good placement matching ensures that young people make good progress from the point of admission. They soon feel settled and happy. Their experiences are good. The manager told the inspector: 'Young people are settled here and are a good match.'

There is a high emphasis on mental health and emotional well-being because of young people's backgrounds and previous experiences. The relationship with the organisation's psychotherapist is particularly strong. Joint working promotes progress, and there is a clear approach to helping young people with their emotions. Young people learn to trust staff and readily talk to them about their problems and worries. Young people spend a lot of time with staff, both in the home and on activities. Staff use their time with young people wisely and know how to engage with each of them. They do not push young people to talk about their problems and are kind, patient and caring in their approach. Young people know that staff are always there for them. One young person reported: 'The best thing is that the staff are nice.'

Staff are exceptionally keen for young people to have some control over their lives. As a result, young people are central to decisions about food, the home's decor, and activities. Staff try to understand what young people have been through before coming to the home. They recognise that, for some young people, choice is not easy and take a step-by-step approach. This helps young people to feel valued and respected.

Staff understand the importance of young people having positive relationships with friends and family. Visits and telephone calls are properly facilitated and well managed by staff. Staff promote progress as far as they can. One young person's contact with their family has recently increased after the introduction of more regular visits. Young

people maintain and further develop relationships with people who they will be able to rely on in their futures.

Young people's education is arranged soon after their admission. If there are delays in local authorities identifying a suitable school, the manager does not wait. She takes the matter into her own hands, so that young people do not miss education unnecessarily. Young people are listened to and have their say about what they want from their education. They enjoy education, and the manager has very high aspirations for them. Where some young people have missed a lot of education before coming to the home, they soon make up for lost time. However, not all staff fully understand young people's educational journey prior to coming to the home and how they are progressing in their current placement. They therefore do not know how to appropriately support young people to promote further progress.

Young people are helped by staff to celebrate their success and to reflect positively on their time at the home. There are scrapbooks, photographs, memory books and memorabilia for them to take away with them. When they leave, they know that they will be missed. Young people will be more likely to reflect positively on their experiences in the future because of good-quality work and support in this area.

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

Young people are safe because of the manager's approach. Young people are in a 'safe pair of hands' in her care. She is always at the forefront of decisions about safety. She is skilled in leading the staff team to negotiate with young people about how they can manage their own risks. During the inspection, the inspector observed the very careful consideration of an increase in one young person's free time. This ensured their protection at a time of high vulnerability. The young person reported: 'I am confident that the manager will sort it out.' The approach is one of negotiation with young people, and they are more likely to adhere to their risk management plans because they have participated in the decision making.

Young people learn about how to develop socially acceptable behaviour. One young person said: 'I used to mess about.' One social worker commented particularly positively, saying: 'Where there are incidents, these are very well managed; she has reduced incidents of aggression because they are clear with her.' Restraints are only used as a last resort. The one restraint since the last inspection was managed and recorded well. A clear picture of what happened, and when, can be established by any person wishing to review this now or in the future.

Staff responses when young people go missing are excellent. This makes a positive difference to young people's safety because they go missing less. All staff 'go the extra mile' in trying to find them. They work particularly well with other professionals. They understand young people's social media networks thoroughly and use the internet quickly and efficiently to examine their online profile. This enables them to find possible associates, which assists other agencies such as the police.

Work is completed with young people after each missing episode. Staff do not wait for a formal interview to ascertain safety, but establish information as soon as possible to protect young people without delay. Creative work takes place to engage young people in learning about their own safety. For example, a game has been developed to engage young people in learning about how they could be groomed and to increase awareness of sexual exploitation.

Risk assessments are continually developed to reflect young people's complex and changing risks. They are particularly helpful to staff because they set out how individual risks should be managed, so that young people can be protected effectively. Risk assessments do not fully cover the risks to young people from internet use on their own or on each other's mobile telephones. There is the potential for these aspects of risk to be ineffectively managed in the future if this is not put right. Young people's vulnerability to radicalisation has been considered through staff discussion and training, but risk assessments do not reflect how young people can be protected in this area.

Staff know the organisation's policies and procedures for when there is a safeguarding concern. They pass on important safeguarding information to their manager and to other relevant authorities, such as local authorities and the police. Consequently, the correct professionals can make timely, good-quality decisions about young people's safety.

The organisation ensures that there is an effective procedure for relevant checks to take place on new staff, including an interview, three references and a check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This reduces the risk of young people being harmed by unsuitable adults.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is well qualified, having worked in childcare and management for several years. She holds the level 5 diploma in leadership and management. Leadership in the home is further strengthened by the work of an effective deputy manager. There are some very positive comments about leadership from young people, professionals and staff. One staff member said that the manager is 'amazing'. A professional commented: 'The home is well managed and they communicate well with me.'

Strong and effective management ensures that young people's best interests are always at the forefront of the home's operation. Managers are not afraid of escalating delays from other professionals when they feel that young people are not getting the service that they deserve. The manager also ensures that young people have a 'voice'. Recently she put one young person in touch with a children's rights service. This helped the young person to put their own opinion across about their next placement. Young people are always listened to and always at the centre of practice.

Staff training is very good and staff have completed mandatory training and other

training relevant to young people's needs, such as in attachment, mental health and sexually harmful behaviour. This helps staff to know how to care for and support young people.

There have been five new staff in the last seven months. The changes have had no impact on the quality of care, which remains good. Some staff are still in probation and continue to need a lot of support to progress in their role. Some are not yet confident in their understanding of all young people's needs and do not have extensive knowledge about the young people's backgrounds and previous education. These newer staff are always on duty with more experienced staff, who know the young people and the operation of the home well. Therefore, the effect on young people is very minimal. The manager knows that the team needs to develop and has recently secured some money to provide some team-building exercises. Young people all speak positively about staff, and one said: 'They do try hard, I really notice it.'

Staff receive regular supervision sessions from their manager. However, one new staff member was not supervised for several weeks. This had been put right prior to the inspection. The staff member told the inspector that they are feeling supported and confident in their role. Some supervision records appear to be brief and basic, as do team meeting minutes, although young people's care is always discussed. The manager plans to improve this as her team develops. Research-based practice has started to develop and there is scope for this to be more regularly built into care planning. For example, there has been recent research on attachment theory, which has been cascaded to staff to aid their understanding of one young person's difficulties.

The manager is proactive about all aspects of young people's care. Where risks are presented, she uses community networks to influence young people's safety. She has recently made an appointment with the local Member of Parliament to discuss better local links with regard to child sexual exploitation. She is hoping to positively influence young people's safety for the future.

The two recommendations set at the last inspection have been met. There have been improvements to the management of missing from home return interviews and to records, which are now clearer and more reflective of young people's needs and events in 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: SC490364

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Blue Mountain Homes Ltd

Registered provider address: Flat 17, Leeland Mansions, Leeland Road, London W13 9HE

Responsible individual: Pradeep Manaktala

Registered manager: Donna King

Inspector(s)

Caroline Brailsford, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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