

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC065684
Inspector	Keith Riley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	J & R Care Limited
Registered person address	J & R Care Ltd, Ash House Ash Road, New Ash Green Longfield Kent DA3 8JD
Responsible individual	Jane Nicola Parish
Registered manager	Brendan Aherne
Date of last inspection	11/03/2014

Inspection date	13/05/2014
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Previous inspection	inadequate progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	adequate
Outcomes for children and young people	adequate
Quality of care	adequate
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is privately run and provides care and accommodation for no more than five young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Education is provided in an adjacent building.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/03/2014	Interim	inadequate progress
07/11/2013	Full	adequate
05/03/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
10/10/2012	Full	adequate

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose (Regulation 17B (3))	30/06/2014
17B (2001)	ensure that the written record kept for any measure of control, restraint or discipline confirms that the child concerned and the person using the measure have been spoken to (Regulation 17B (3)(h))	30/06/2014
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system to monitor matters set out in Schedule 6; in particular any incidents in respect of a child accommodated at the children's home and the measures taken by the persons	30/06/2014

	working at the children's home to respond effectively to these to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of the child (Regulation 34 (1)(a) (Schedule 6(1)))	
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system to monitor matters set out in Schedule 6; in particular the effectiveness of arrangements agreed between the children's home, local police and the local authority for responding to missing persons incidents in relation to children accommodated at the children's home (Regulation 34 (1)(a)(Schedule 6(2)))	30/06/2014
11 (2001)	ensure the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated there; in particular ensure risk assessments are in place for known risks and revised when necessary. (Regulation 11 (1)(a))	30/06/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure the views and concerns of children in the home are actively taken into account (NMS 1.2)
- provide a comfortable and homely environment that is well maintained and decorated. (NMS 10.3)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Young people's emotional well-being is promoted and prioritised, with the staff arranging and facilitating contact with other professionals, such as child and adolescent mental health services or the home's psychotherapist. Young people are being supported as they address some difficult emotional issues.

Young people benefit from carefully planned health care. They are able to make informed decisions about whether they wish to take advantage of the advice and support offered, for example, treatment through an orthodontist. Staff ensure that young people seek professional advice when necessary, for example, the smoking cessation nurse. Consequently, one young person has stopped smoking; however, other young people continue to make poor choices, such as misusing substances.

Behaviour management plans guide staff in how best to keep young people safe, while simultaneously allowing them to take responsibility for their own actions. This is coupled with a key-work programme that provides young people with many opportunities to build on positive relationships with staff to consider why they behave as they do. However, young people continue at times not to engage with staff and involve themselves in minor criminal offending.

Staff promote education and learning. There is good communication between care and education staff. Some young people make good progress. They gain academic qualifications and move onto college. Other young people at the home do not engage with their education and attendance is very poor. They are at risk of not gaining any academic qualifications and limiting their life chances.

Contact with family members and other people important in young people's lives is fully supported. Staff demonstrate a clear commitment to facilitating contact, for example, changing venues to promote successful contact with parents. Staff work in partnership with other professionals to increase contact, including unsupervised contact, to decrease the likelihood that young people will go absent from the home without permission to see individuals who are important to them. This currently has had only limited success.

The organisation is proactive in preparing pathway plans. Staff set clear targets to support young people to develop their independent living skills. Young people have the opportunity to increase their life skills such as cooking or managing their own budget. Young people are prepared for work, for example, they feel listened to about their vocational interests. Staff are engaging in work experience in fields they are interested in. Young people are being well prepared for adult life.

Quality of care

adequate

A key strength of the home is placement stability. Young people form good attachments with staff who are attentive to their needs. Young people, who stay long term in the home, demonstrate good improvements in behaviour, emotional maturity and academic achievements.

Staff ensure they explore and understand the underlying psychological reasons for young people's behaviour, such as leaving the home without permission. This includes referral to the home's psychotherapist who provides comprehensive assessment and reports of the emerging needs of the young people in the home. There is some innovative practice, such as providing a social networking address for the home, to enable young people to stay in touch through alternative means when they are absent without permission. However, some records, such as risk assessments, have not been updated to reflect emerging concerns.

Key documents, such as placement plans and behavioural support plans, guide staff in how to best support the young people in their care. However, on occasion, records do not demonstrate exactly what, why or how a particular intervention is used. In one instance it is not evident whether physical intervention has been used or if it was justified. The independent visitor to the home commented, 'Staff need to respond differently'. On another occasion records suggest that the response of staff escalated a situation and then needed to use a physical intervention. Some inaccuracy in recording events means there is insufficient information to analyse all incidents. This means that there is not robust challenge and reflection to adjust strategies.

The good behaviour of young people is encouraged through the use of rewards and sanctions. However, these are not always written up in a timely fashion or reviewed for their effectiveness. The views of young people are not always sought or recorded. This means there is not always a comprehensive review and practice may not change when necessary.

Key work staff meet regularly with young people and show an active interest in their views. A placing social worker said that the young person they have placed in the home has a good relationship with their key-worker. There is regular opportunity for young people to discuss any issues during a daily meeting with education and care staff. However, their views and concerns after an incident are not always sought or written down. Young people express frustration about this and say that they feel their view has not been taken seriously. Young people do not have a strong voice in the home all the time.

There is an acceptable procedure for dealing with medication. Staff demonstrate a sensitive approach, such as consulting with the pharmacist about alternative forms of medication to encourage young people to comply with their prescribed regime. However, there is no recorded medical advice or assessment of risk, in the event of repeated refusal of medication or when young people are not taking their medication

due to being absent from the home. Staff state they have assessed the risks in consultation with a health professional, but the absence of records means decisions about what to do on a particular shift may be less secure.

Young people are learning to understand the nutritional value of eating a good diet. They have an appreciation of different cultures and a range of international cuisine.

Needs relating to young people's cultural background and personal identity are positively addressed in both daily living and care planning by a diverse staff team. For example, young people are encouraged and supported to explore their ethnic background.

Young people live in a home that offers them an adequate standard of accommodation. Communal areas are comfortable. However, the home has been subject to a high level of damage. There is a maintenance team who respond quickly to immediate issues. There is a redecoration programme in place to bring the décor up to a good standard. Young people are encouraged to personalise their rooms and do so with posters and pictures. This gives them a sense of identity and belonging.

Young people are encouraged to be part of the local community and take advantage of local facilities. Activities such as swimming, ice-skating and rock climbing are offered. Young people benefit from a staff team who are committed to supporting them in meaningful pursuits. Young people have raised money for a national charity through a 'Swimathon'. This builds their confidence, self-esteem and gives a sense of engagement with the wider society.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

There is a good procedure in place that is followed by staff in the event of an allegation. The Registered Manager ensures there is consultation with other professionals, such as the Local Authority Designated Officer, to agree strategies. This ensures that all are safeguarded and supported while investigations take place. Written records are now being kept which give a chronology of events and the actions taken.

Effective recruitment procedures in line with the regulations ensure all checks are completed before a staff member is authorised to work in the home. This ensures that young people are cared for by appropriate adults.

Staff are aware of the vulnerabilities of young people in their care and are very clear what action to take should a missing person incident occur. This includes an understanding that restraint cannot be used to prevent a young person leaving the property. Young people now have mobile phones to enable staff to stay in contact with them, to ensure their ongoing safety. Young people are kept as safe as possible when missing. On occasion, police have been critical of the timing of the reporting of

unauthorised absences. Risk assessments and protocols have been amended to improve things. However, they are not consistently followed, such as reporting a young person missing from care to the police within one hour of the event. Although young people are not considered to be at immediate risk, there is no agreement with the police to change the protocol for individual situations. This means that the partnership working is not robust enough to ensure a swift and effective response, if needed, to missing person incidents.

In general risk assessments are in place to guide staff to keep young people as safe as possible. However, individualised risk assessments are not in place following incidents, such as young people gaining access to a roof or repeated refusal of medication. Although staff take advice and show a good understanding of what to do, there is no written guidance to ensure a consistent approach to keep young people safe. Other practice, such as the use of child locks on vehicles, is an established custom with no evidence of risk to justify this restriction.

Some young people say they feel safe and looked after and that they are helped to address their difficult or risky behaviour. However, some young people continue to place themselves at risk by going missing and committing criminal offences, such as shop-lifting or misusing substances. Staff do use protocols and behaviour management plans to support dealing with these issues, but for some young people this has not stopped these behaviours from happening.

Young people live in a safe environment. Regular health and safety checks ensure the standard is maintained. External agencies certify the safety of the environment such as the fire alarm system. Young people know how to evacuate in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

adequate

The organisation demonstrates a good commitment to staff training. Staff feel their training needs are met and they positively engage in the training on offer. Young people are cared and supported by a competent and consistent staff team who are dedicated to meet their individual needs. Professionals describe the staff as very co-operative.

The home offers care and accommodation for young people in line with its Statement of Purpose. The aims and objectives of the home are understood by authorities who place young people in the home. Young people have every chance of a successful, long-term placement until they reach adult-hood.

The Registered Manager considers the running of the home on a regular basis. However, some issues, such the timeliness of the record of measures of control or restraint, are not identified as part of the Registered Manager's monitoring. Likewise, some incidents involving physical intervention have not been recorded as physical

intervention, in accordance with regulation. Not all records confirm that the young person and staff member have been spoken to after an incident. There is insufficient scrutiny of events and challenge by the Registered Manager on every occasion. Internal monitoring systems are not identifying some key issues. There is a risk that important information is not being gathered to provide learning opportunities and accountability. This means that the welfare of young people could be more fully promoted.

Visits by an independent visitor, who reports monthly on the service being delivered, are comprehensive. One report had already identified the shortfalls in leadership and management identified at inspection. A report states, 'the manager monitoring needs to occur for all incidents within a suitable time-frame' and 'ensure all recording is under the correct category'. This means that there is sufficient external challenge to the leadership and management of the home, however, the comments from the independent visitor have not been acted upon.

In general, social workers and other agencies comment positively on the running of the home and progress made by young people. One placing social worker said that staff are doing all they can. Social workers spoken to during the inspection commented that communication is improving, such as telephone contact and receiving monthly reports.

The previous requirements and recommendations have been met. Restraint is no longer used to prevent young people leaving the home and all necessary fire precautions are in place. Staff response to young people going absent without authorisation has improved.

There is an improvement plan in place with clear targets to improve the quality of the service. However, this does not include updating key policies in line with the most recent statutory guidance, such as missing from care.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.

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