

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC415347
Inspector	Julian Mason
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Young Options College Limited
Registered person address	Turnpike Gate House Alcester Heath Alcester Warwickshire B49 5JG
Responsible individual	Graham Baker
Registered manager	Mark Anthony Duckers
Date of last inspection	03/02/2014

Inspection date	02/07/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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The home has been empty for three weeks and has only just started to admit new young people.

Overall, young people receive care and support that is tailored to meet their needs. The staff team are knowledgeable and aware of their roles and responsibilities in terms of promoting young people's safety, welfare and protection. This includes managing risky, challenging and difficult behaviours that can affect young people's relationships and the progress they are able to make. Some young people have struggled to engage positively despite the supportive and patient approaches from the staff team. Where young people have made choices that are potentially harmful or behave in ways that are risky, staff work to lessen the impact of these circumstances and encourage positive change. Young people are consulted on a daily basis about their routines and they are frequently involved in decisions that affect their lives. Current young people say that they feel safe in the home and with the staff who look after them.

One requirement and two recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to only admitting young people whose assessed needs the home can reasonably expect to meet; that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of young people accommodated and the numbers of staff

working in the home are consistent with achieving continuity and consistency of care.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/02/2014	Interim	good progress
27/06/2013	Full	adequate
30/01/2013	Interim	good progress
15/08/2012	Full	good

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
25 (2001)	ensure that the employment of any persons on a temporary basis at the children's home will not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. (Regulation 25(2))	31/08/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure the children's home only provides admission to children whose assess

needs they can reasonably expect to meet. This relates to the matching of needs regarding newly referred children against the existing resident group (NMS 11.2)

- ensure staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of children and purpose of the setting, and training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the home. (NMS 18.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **inadequate**

Recent outcomes for previously placed young people have been poor with placements ending because of escalating antisocial, offending and risk taking behaviours. Young people have not engaged with their carers in any meaningful or sustained way resulting in a lack of influence with regard to role modelling more socially acceptable behaviours.

Young people's existing placements are considered as part of assessing the potential impact of new admissions to the home. However, assessments of compatibility in terms of needs and risks are only formally considered once a placement has been accepted. This practice places young people in a vulnerable situation because even where there are obvious incompatibilities, placements to the home are still made. This poor practice has had a negative impact on young people's placements and made it harder for the staff team to effect any change in behaviour.

Young people have experienced an increased number of different carers coming into the home because of staff shortages. Although most staff are known to young people, this has resulted in them being looked after by carers who were not part of the home's permanent team, and has contributed to young people's attachments and relationships not being fully consistent or beneficial in helping them move forward in their lives.

Young people's attendance and engagement in education varies, which has an impact on what they can achieve. Difficult and disruptive behaviours have hindered young people's progress mainly because of negative peer influences and relationships. Young people's reluctance to consistently engage in their individual timetables has affected their learning. In these circumstances, young people experience positive support and encouragement in an attempt to help them overcome their difficulties. However, the potential influence the team has had in gaining improvements has been minimal.

New young people to the home are given a chance to settle in before an individual education plan is finalised and implemented. Young people who are keen to return to school after a lengthy absence appreciate this approach and the consideration given to them regarding their individual circumstances and wishes.

Young people are supported to access a variety of healthcare services and they are encouraged to attend routine appointments and check-ups. Young people who are resistant to engage and talk about their needs are given advice and support that helps them understand potential consequences to their health and what can be done to help them. Young people receive advice and support to meet their emotional and psychological needs but have not engaged consistently in the available therapeutic

support. Despite young people's difficulties, the promotion of their good health and well-being has remained a priority.

Young people's contact arrangements are well known and includes necessary and agreed limits or restrictions. Family visits and phone calls are well supported because staff understand the importance young people place on these arrangements. Family members are made to feel welcome in the home when they visit and this approach helps build cooperative relationships between staff and young people's immediate family. Staff show a clear commitment and support to agreed arrangements even though contact and family relationships maybe difficult at times.

Quality of care

adequate

Positive and constructive relationships are encouraged within the home. Young people's behaviour can sometimes be difficult and challenging but staff work hard to ensure a balanced and fair approach is taken. The home's staff have been supported to develop their behaviour management practice to help create opportunities for each young person to improve their relationships and behaviour. While reasonable boundaries and expectations have been promoted, young people's behaviour has still been inconsistent and risky at times. On a number of occasions recently, staff have needed to call the police to the home for assistance and support.

Case files are detailed and identify individual needs of each young person and provide guidance to staff on how these needs are to be met. Tailored plans reflect the unique backgrounds and family histories of each young person. This helps staff to understand and learn about the diverse needs of each individual. Staff focus on relationship building and this contributes to an individualised approach to young people's care.

Young people are consulted continuously about their care and support needs. This helps staff to plan and organise themselves in a way that ensures each young person gets the right support and help when needed. For example, arranging to see other professionals, being helped with family contact and arranging leisure activities. This approach ensures the home's operation is influenced and shaped by the choices and needs of each young person.

Young people are routinely encouraged to communicate any concerns or complaints they may have and this includes using outside services if needed. The home keeps a record of all complaints, which evidences that young people are listened to and acceptable outcomes achieved. The Registered Manager and staff team consistently promote young people's rights as part of their routine one-to-one discussions and house meetings.

Overall, young people are provided with accommodation that is clean, tidy and comfortable. The home benefits from contemporary décor, which young people like.

Regular checks of the interior and exterior of the building are undertaken to help ensure acceptable standards of health and safety are achieved and maintained. Bedrooms for newly arriving young people are prepared in a way that presents opportunities to personalise their own space from day one. However, delays in fixing a large broken window on the ground floor has meant that efforts to create a welcoming atmosphere in all areas of the home were diminished.

Young people participate in a number of leisure and recreational opportunities within the home and wider community. The home has very assessable and open communal areas where young people can use and enjoy a whole range of newly purchased games and outdoor activities.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people feel safe in the home and with the adults who look after them. The staff team understand their roles and responsibilities for safeguarding arrangements. There are very clear procedures in place for responding to any child protection or safe care concerns and these arrangements are reinforced by training for all staff. Detailed assessments are in place, which identify any areas of risk and vulnerability for each young person. Staff use this information to shape their daily work and practices. The manager and staff team regularly discuss safeguarding practices in one-to-one and team meetings.

Where disclosures or events of a child protection nature occur, the Registered Manager and staff team work professionally and responsibly with other agencies to ensure information is appropriately shared that follows local safeguarding procedures and protocols. The home's records reflect that the Registered Manager works in partnership with other child protection professionals in making sure young people are safe. Young people's safety and protection is prioritised when risks or concerns are discovered or reported.

Some young people have significant histories of placing themselves at risk, which include considerable patterns of absconding behaviour or being missing from care. Young people are discouraged from behaving in this risky way but sometimes they still choose to leave the home without permission. When this happens, staff use individual risk assessments to guide their responses and practices. The Registered Manager ensures local protocols are followed which include working with the police to help reduce the impact of these circumstances. The Registered Manager and staff team continually review and assess these events to find ways of helping young people change their behaviours.

Staff work in a way that supports and encourages socially acceptable behaviour and relationships. Any unacceptable behaviour is challenged as staff use their skills and experience to set clear and reasonable boundaries. This means everyone in the home knows what is expected in terms of behaviour towards each other. Young people are

praised and congratulated and receive rewards for behaving well. Physical restraint is not used often and formal sanctions are only applied in circumstances where less formal interventions have not worked. The staff team have sometimes struggled to positively influence young people's behaviour, which has been challenging, risky and very disruptive. In these circumstances, staff use their training to try and deescalate situations which has resulted in varying degrees of success.

Young people's safety is further protected by the careful selection and vetting of all staff working with young people. New staff do not start work in the home until their suitability has been assessed and the Registered Manager is satisfied that all necessary checks have been completed. Staff and young people have access to fire prevention and detection equipment that is regularly tested and serviced. There are scheduled opportunities to practice the evacuation of the premises to ensure everyone knows what to do in an emergency.

Leadership and management

adequate

The home is managed by a qualified, experienced Registered Manager who has been in post for a number of years. The post holder also manages another registered children's home close by and his time is shared between both homes depending on the needs, demands and circumstances of each service.

The Registered Manager provides effective management and has systems in place to ensure that the quality of care and the impact the home is having on young people's lives is regularly assessed. Monitoring visits are completed monthly on behalf of the registered provider and any shortfalls identified are addressed. The Registered Manager also has internal systems in place to monitor the operation of the home. These have been updated recently so that this information can be shared quarterly with the regulator. The home's development plan is kept up to date and reflects the service's on-going development to improve on what is already being provided.

The service has a detailed Statement of Purpose that sets out clearly the aims and objectives of the home and it has recently been updated. The Registered Manager is actively involved in maintaining good neighbour relations. Local residents are able to contact the home directly about any concerns they have regarding the operation of the home. The Registered Manager responds to any contact made by neighbours and has recently been dealing with a complaint from a local resident.

Staff receive formal supervision as well as regular and practical day-to-day support from the Registered Manager, seniors and colleagues. There is an effective on-call system to support staff if needed. The Registered Manager closely monitors staffing levels and adjusts these where necessary to ensure that young people receive the right support and supervision that matches the home's circumstances. However, a combination of events has necessitated the use of an increasing number of staff from other homes. Although individual shifts are still led by experienced members of the

team, the opportunities young people have had recently to develop relationships with all their carers has been limited. However, this situation has now improved with the home less reliant on staff from other services.

The service is committed to ensuring the staff team receive the appropriate core training to help them perform their duties and to gain appropriate qualifications. Staff receive training in key areas of practice, such as safeguarding, behaviour management, first aid, food hygiene and fire safety. However, it is not clear how many staff receive additional training that relates to young people's specific needs, such as vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking and managing incidents of self-harming behaviour.

Young people's case files contain the required information and are stored securely. The Registered Manager has systems in place to ensure all significant events relating to the protection of young people are notified to appropriate agencies.

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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