

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC428599
Inspector	Valerie Shephard
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Courtyard Care Limited
Registered person address	130 Highfield Road Farnworth BOLTON BL4 0AJ

Responsible individual	Colin Richard Gallimore
Registered manager	Martin Rickaby Hadfield
Date of last inspection	21/10/2013

Inspection date	29/05/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a privately owned company and is registered for up to four children or young people who have a learning disability or mental health disorder.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/10/2013	Interim	good progress
23/05/2013	Full	good
12/02/2013	Interim	good progress
07/11/2012	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
12B (2001)	ensure to notify, in writing, the local authority for the area in which the children's home is located without delay of the admission of a child into, or the discharge of a child from, the children's home.(Regulation 12B (1)(a)(b))	31/07/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately and

experienced staff (NMS 19.4)

- ensure copies of regulation 33 reports are sent to Ofsted. (Volume 5:3.13)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Outcomes for young people vary depending on how long they have lived in the home and their particular and specific needs. The home celebrates the small steps young people achieve. For example one young person now eats with the rest of the group at mealtimes. This is a significant improvement from the position a few months ago. There are good outcomes in terms of young people who have returned home or moved on to independent living. Often young people maintain contact with the home and in some cases the therapeutic team provides outreach support.

Overall young people enjoy good physical health supported by access to primary health care services. Regular consultation and review with the Care in Mind psychiatrist ensures young people's mental health needs are met. One young person said of their progress, 'I hardly do any self-harm now, I feel a lot brighter and am talking more to people. I am less anxious, more positive and obsessional thoughts have reduced. My therapy is going okay.'

The large majority of young people attend education either through school or other provision. Where young people are out of school, staff work hard with external agencies to try and secure appropriate educational provision for them. In these cases, the provision of home tutoring is helpful while permanent arrangements are made. However, for some young people their particular difficulties have hindered their ability to access education at the present time. Links with external agencies ensures young people have access to information, advice and guidance in relation to personal, training and work opportunities.

Most young people participate in sporting and leisure activities such as swimming, walking and visiting the local park. These activities assist young people to develop their social skills and feel involved in the wider community. For some young people a great deal of encouragement is necessary to motivate them to participate. Staff continue to be creative in their efforts to find new pastimes to interest young people.

Young people benefit from maintaining contact with their families as this helps them to sustain relationships and sustain a sense of identity. The home actively challenges situations where contact is no longer beneficial for young people or is contraindicated. Fruitful dialogue with placing agencies ensures that contact remains in the young person's best interests.

Overall young people make progress in understanding what has brought them to the home and how to manage their emotions and behaviour. With the assistance of the therapeutic process, they learn about the impact their early life experiences have on their behaviour. The positive relationships which exist between staff and young people help them learn alternative coping strategies to those they have previously

used.

Quality of care

good

Staff provide good quality and consistent care to young people which assists with the development of positive relationships. Young people enjoy spending time with their favoured member of staff and as a result there is evidence of attachments developing. Good working relationships exist between the staff and the therapeutic service which supports young people's emotional and psychological well-being. A placing authority service manager said, 'there is excellent care and service from a dedicated and highly skilled team.

Young people are cared for in line with their individualised placement plans which aim to meet their diverse needs. Plans are subject to regular review and update. Consultation with young people ensures they have an input into the running of the home and delivery of their care. For example, one young person is currently working with staff to amend the children's guide. There are efficient systems in place to make sure that staff hear what young people have to say. The home effectively consults with young people through questionnaires, house meetings and key worker sessions. A recent example of this was where a young person requested a change of bedroom which the manager considered and agreed to. Where staff are unable to act upon young people's wishes, this is clearly explained to them and documented. Young people know how to complain and there is evidence on file of where they have done so in the past.

Staff work hard to provide a healthy environment to young people to meet their holistic health needs. They ensure young people are able to attend their health appointments. Menu planning focuses on healthy and choices. This can often be a challenge as some young people prefer meals familiar to them and are reluctant to try new foods. Young people are encouraged to prepare and cook their favourite dishes and share these during communal meals.

Staff support young people to be prepared and ready to engage fully in their education. There is evidence that they work cooperatively with social workers and educational providers to ensure young people's educational needs are met. There is an improvement in communication with schools resulting in more consistent management of young people between school and the home.

A parent said of the home, 'I am very happy with where my child lives; it is very convenient to visit. The staff are always friendly and support my child well, and my child engages with the staff. I am kept up to date with my child's progress by the key worker.'

Keeping children and young people safe good

The home provides a safe environment for young people without creating an institutional feel. Young people say they feel safe. When they have not felt safe, for example due to other young people's behaviour, they have spoken to staff members. There have been no investigations or allegations of a child protection nature and no reports of bullying in the home.

Overall, missing from home events have reduced considerably for those young people who are established. However, newly admitted young people can present a challenge until they settle down, get to know staff and begin to feel safe. Staff understand the protocols to follow when young people go missing. In most cases staff know where the young person is and can effect a swift return. Sometimes it has been necessary to involve the emergency services where young people have a history of harming themselves. There is evidence that the home is building stronger relationships with the police. Currently they are working jointly on the home's community risk assessment and reviewing the procedures for dealing with missing events. These measures serve to strengthen the home's responses and actions to any incidents where young people go missing from home.

The home adopts a positive approach to behaviour management, encouraging young people to work towards tangible rewards. Where appropriate, sanctions are used to dissuade young people from inappropriate behaviour. Efficient evaluation of the effectiveness of rewards and sanctions ensures they are appropriate and continue to meet young people's individual needs.

Staff are trained in the use of physical restraint, but only use this technique as a last resort. Talking calmly and/or steering away assists young people to self-pacify and regain control of their behaviour. Records clearly demonstrate a reduction in the number of restraints over the last few months. A description of the events leading up to the incident and an evaluation of their effectiveness are evident on records. This enables the manager to maintain oversight of the use and effectiveness of restraints used.

Robust recruitment practices result in suitable and appropriate vetting of new staff. Checks and references help to ensure the home does not appoint adults who could pose a risk to young people. Verification of references and exploration of gaps in employment histories are routinely undertaken. These practices support safer recruitment to benefit the young people in the home.

Attention to the home's physical environment helps to maintain safety for all the young people. There is evidence of improved safety measures in relation to the storage of kitchen knives and medication in the home.

Leadership and management

good

The home has benefitted from the provision of a registered manager since December 2013. The manager has experience in managing children's homes and possesses a management qualification. He is currently working toward a graduate diploma in Child and Adolescent Mental Health. This will aid further development of the service and quality of care provided to young people who experience complex mental health difficulties.

The manager has implemented a range of new systems and templates to improve care delivery to young people. For example, revision of placement plans and risk assessments enable easier amendment and consequently are up to date. There is evidence of effective monitoring and evaluation of the home's operations under regulation 34. This provides oversight of the home's operations and outcomes for young people. An independent visitor reports on the quality of care under regulation 33 and the manager addresses actions raised to drive forward improvement. However, the manager has failed to send a copy of these reports to Ofsted as required. Consequently the regulator is unable to maintain an oversight of the running of the home. While this does not have a negative impact on young people, a recommendation is made in this respect.

The staff team are well qualified and experienced. The majority of staff have an appropriate child care qualification and remaining staff are working towards this. Staff are provided with suitable training which equips them with the skills necessary to offer good quality care to young people. Additional training in topics such as autism awareness and managing challenging behaviour assists staff to support young people with these difficulties. The provision of training and monthly reflective practice for staff through the therapeutic service further enhances their skills with young people. The home benefits from sufficiency of staff and where necessary uses bank staff already familiar with the home. This provides consistency of care particularly where young people struggle with changes to their routine.

Generally staff receive regular and supportive supervision. However there have been occasions when staff have missed planned supervision sessions. It has sometimes been necessary to re-arrange sessions, often at short notice, to meet the immediate needs of the young people. This means that the manager has lost formal opportunities to monitor staff and check on their development and care of young people. A recommendation is made in this respect.

Overall the home's records are in good order and give a clear account of each young person's life in the home. There is notification of significant events relating to the protection of children to the appropriate authorities as required. However a shortfall exists in that there has been failure to inform the local authority of new admissions into the home. A requirement is made in this respect.

The manager has met the one requirement and one recommendation from the last

inspection. The requirement related to the recording of accurate information about the legal status of each child on their file. The recommendation pertained to staff supervision records detailing the date and duration of the each session.

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.