

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC021679
Inspector	Sarah Oldham
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Care Today (Children's Services) Ltd
Registered person address	Care Today Children's Services, Lansdowne House 85 Buxton Road STOCKPORT Cheshire SK2 6LR
Responsible individual	Vivien Anne Snape
Registered manager	Nigel Ray Evans
Date of last inspection	12/03/2014

Inspection date	18/07/2014
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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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Young people are settled within their placements, they receive good levels of care and support and have positive relationships with staff team. This enables them to feel well-cared for and safe. They have detailed care plans in place that identify their individual needs and how these will be met. Staff have high aspirations for all young people, working in partnership with other professionals, thereby enabling continuity of care and support. One young person said 'staff really encourage me to do my best and they are interested in how well I am doing. I haven't always felt positive about my future but I now feel settled and I am working hard to make sure that I do well.' Young people benefit from stability of placements and they are making steady progress from their admission to the home, including their education, behaviour and involvement in leisure activities. Young people say that they feel safe living at the home and staff discuss their safety and well-being with them.

The home is well managed by a qualified and experienced Registered Manager. They provide good leadership to an experienced and competent core staff team. The manager is aware of the homes strengths and areas for on-going development to drive forward improvement.

Recommendations made at this inspection to further improve outcomes for young people are in relation to ensuring that responses to surveys are clearly recorded to

demonstrate the action that the home has taken to address any concerns or comments raised and ensuring that furniture that is showing signs of wear and tear is replaced.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is one of a number of children's homes run by a private organisation. This home provides medium- to long-term care for up to four young people who experience emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/03/2014	Interim	good progress
13/12/2013	Full	good
15/02/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
30/11/2012	Full	good

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

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the views, wishes and feelings of children and those significant are taken into account. This is in particular relationship to responding to comments or concerns raised on consultation surveys with parents (NMS 1.7)
- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. This is in relationship to the sofa bed in the activity room and the sofa in the main lounge which are both showing signs of wear and tear (NMS 10.3).

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people say that they feel happy and settled at the home which contributes to making them feel safe and well cared for. They have good relationships with the staff who, they feel, treat them with dignity, respect and understanding. The staff have high aspirations for the young people and want them to achieve well in all areas of their lives. They do this by providing support, care and guidance in a consistent, open and transparent manner. They provide praise and recognition for the achievements that young people make but will challenge and implement appropriate boundaries to enable young people to feel safe and secure whilst making progress to achieve their individual goals.

Young people are supported with all areas of health care. As well as being registered with health care professionals, advice and guidance is also provided with regards smoking cessation and impact of substance misuse. This enables them to have a comprehensive understanding of the health implications and to receive support to address this. They are also fully involved in shopping and planning their menus to support them to understand the importance of healthy eating and effective budgeting. This supports those young people on pathway plans to prepare for adulthood and other young people to begin to gain this knowledge and experience.

Currently, all the young people at the home are in full time education. The staff from the home maintain good links with schools to promote education. Where previously, a young person has had limited attendance with education, staff have provided additional support to enable an increase in attendance from their initial starting point. Staff assist and support those young people moving on from school to further education. They attend open days with young people and also support them to secure work experience placements in connection with their chosen courses.

Contact arrangements with family and friends is promoted in accordance with agreements within individual placement plans. Young people confirm that they are encouraged to have their friends and family visit them at the home. One young person said,, 'my friends can come on activities with me or visit me at here which is really good.' Where there is any restrictions on contact, this is clearly identified. Staff ensure that where young people have restrictions on contact, they have access to independent visitors and advocacy services. This ensures that they are not isolated and that their safety and welfare is promoted.

Quality of care **good**

Young people live in a supportive home where their individual needs are clearly identified. Young people say that they have good relationships with the staff and feel confident with the support that they receive. One young person said, 'this is the best home that I have lived in. Staff listen to me, explain things and when things don't always go the way that I want, they take time to discuss and explain the reasons why some decisions have been made. I think that they want me to do well and this encourages me.'

Care planning is individualised and all young people have involvement in their care plans. These plans reflect the needs identified in the placing authority placement and care plans. However, they are more specific and demonstrate how, during their time at the home, young people will be supported. These plans are discussed shared with young people, placing social workers and, where appropriate, family members. These are reviewed on a regular basis to enable progress to be assessed and whether there are any specific changes required to further address individual needs. Daily hand over meetings as well as weekly staff meetings ensure all staff are aware of any changes to the current care needs of young people. Regular keyworker sessions also enable young people to discuss and reflect on their care and support as well as providing specific one-to-one work to be undertaken. This supports young people to receive consistent care and support in line with their assessed needs.

Staff promote education and have high aspirations for young people. They encourage and support young people to attend school, maintain good links with teaching staff and support young people to access further education.

Young people contribute to how the home operates. They say they are able to discuss any worries or concerns with staff and know how to make a complaint. Regular young people's meetings are held and all young people are given the opportunity to have their voice heard. They take part in a range of activities, including horse riding, football and swimming. They have recently been consulted about the activities and plans for the six week summer holidays. This has included arranging a number of day trips and a holiday.

Young people are encouraged and supported to choose the décor for their bedrooms and their views are sought about the décor and furnishings for communal areas of the home. The home is warm and welcoming. However, some furnishings are beginning to show signs of wear and tear, this includes the sofas in the lounge and in the activity area making these areas of the home feel less well maintained.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people say that they feel safe living at the home and know who they can speak with if they have any concerns about their care and support. They say that they have good relationships with staff and are able to discuss any worries that they have with them.

Staff have undertaken safeguarding training and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities to keep young people safe from harm. They understand vulnerabilities for individual young people and detailed risk assessments and behaviour management plans form part of the overall individual care planning for each young person. This enables young people to take managed and controlled risks as part of their on-going development and personal growth.

There are clear procedures in place for when a young person goes missing from the home. Some young people have not always adhered to their individual agreement for times away from the home and have failed to return in accordance with these. Therefore, staff have ensured that they have made all attempts to contact them including phoning them, searching the local area and making contact with known acquaintances. Following any incidents of a young person missing from care, risk assessments are reviewed. If a young person continues to go missing, the home is proactive in arranging multi agency risk management strategy meetings with the placing authority social workers and police and this has enabled clear and detailed responses to be put in place. These measures help promote the safety of the young people.

The home has developed good links with the local police community support officers (PSCO's) who visit the home on a regular basis to speak with young people about safety and well-being as well crime prevention. This helps young people to have a positive view of the police and their role.

Positive behaviour is encouraged and supported. Young people benefit from consistent boundaries and this provides them with a clear understanding of how their behaviours impact on themselves and others. Sanctions are discussed with young people and they are involved in discussing what they feel would be an appropriate sanction for their behaviour. As a result, young people learn appropriate boundaries and the use of sanctions remains low.

The home follows the organisation's recruitment and selection process to ensure that staff only commence at the home following all appropriate checks being undertaken and verified. This ensures that young people are cared for by adults who are safe and competent. Visitors to the home are checked and supervised as appropriate to deter unsuitable people having access to vulnerable young people.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are well protected by a range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff and young people are regularly involved in fire drills to ensure they all know how to safely evacuate the building in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

good

The home's Registered Manager holds level 4 qualifications relevant to working with children and young people and in leadership and management and has been the Registered Manager since April 2010. He is an effective manager who is child-focussed, has high aspirations for young people and is committed to ensuring that they benefit from living at the home. He is supported by an enthusiastic and committed deputy manager and staff team who provide continuity of care and support to the young people.

The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose, which is sufficiently detailed and regularly updated. There is a children's guide for all young people and this is provided, wherever possible, prior to placement as well as within an information pack given to them when they move into the home.

The home has appropriate staffing levels for the number of young people living at the home. Staff have a good knowledge of the needs of the young people and work in partnership with other professionals to enable young people to make progress. One social worker said 'this home is a really positive placement for (name). The staff keep me very well informed and ensure that I receive regular updates of the progress being made.' Another social worker said 'staff are fully supportive of the young person and understand areas of risk well. I feel confident that the support provided is of good standard and (name) is very settled here.'

There is a good balance of skills and experience within the staff team. New staff undertake an induction programme and, if they do not hold a level 3 qualification in Caring for Children and Young People, commence this following their probationary period. The home also provides a range of training for all staff to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge to underpin their practice in providing support to young people. Staff receive regular supervision and say that this is beneficial to their practice. All staff have an annual appraisal and the views that young people give in their regular consultation documents are taken into account within this.

Young people, their families and social workers are regularly asked for their opinions of how well the home meets young people's needs. Questionnaires are sent out and responses to these contribute to the overall running of the home. However, on a small number of these, where a question has been raised, there is no clear audit trail to identify how the manager has responded to the individual raising the question. This means that some people do not know what the home has done to address the points that they have raised. The manager is currently reviewing the system for recording responses.

Young people's case records are stored securely and provide a good overview of their needs, how they are met and progress that they are making.

The manager undertakes regular monitoring of the home and supplies a report to Ofsted on a 3 monthly basis about the home. However, the report format is new and the report did not clearly demonstrate in all areas, the outcomes and progress made

for all young people. This is an area that the manager is currently reviewing. External quality assurance visits are undertaken on a monthly basis by an independent visitor who provides a report on how the home is operating. Any shortfalls identified are responded to in a timely manner.

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.