

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC020171
Inspector	Rachel Griffiths
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Arnfield Care Limited
Registered person address	Brookbank House Wellington Road, Bollington Macclesfield Cheshire SK10 5JR
Responsible individual	Wayne Relf
Registered manager	Paul Bernard Vella
Date of last inspection	05/02/2014

Inspection date	08/10/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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Young people who live in this home make exceptional progress in all areas of their lives. They are provided with exceedingly high-quality individualised care from committed and supported staff who have high aspirations for them. The achievements of the individual are celebrated by all involved in their care. The positive and inclusive ethos of the home and the creative ways in which staff work with young people in relation to the complex difficulties they face has helped young people progress far beyond their own expectations. They develop high, but achievable aspirations for the future.

Young people benefit from an exceptionally knowledgeable, creative and inspirational management team who consistently look for ways to further improve the service and the lives of young people. They strongly advocate on young people's behalves, ensuring that they receive the specialist and creative support which will help them reach their full potentials. There is constant and thorough evaluation of the progress young people make. Consultation and engagement with young people is a key part of this process and a key part of the home's development plan. As a result, young people are central to the running of the home. They feel valued and this assists them to develop substantially in terms of their self-confidence and overall well-being.

Young people living in this home are extremely happy and settled. They feel safe and protected from harm. They have exceptionally positive relationships with a stable, skilled and committed staff team. Consequently, young people's self-esteem and self-confidence continue to significantly improve. The high level of individual care and behaviour management planning with young people, which is consistently implemented by staff, further enhances the sense of safety and well-being young people enjoy. Challenging and risk-taking behaviours are significantly reduced as a result of thorough risk management strategies being implemented by staff. This enables young people to participate in a wide range of community activities and also develop essential life skills without their safety being compromised. As a result, young people's life experiences and skills are greatly enhanced.

The management of the home is extremely strong and any weaknesses in practice are identified and addressed. Two minor shortfalls identified during this inspection in respect of medication recording and a slight delay in notification being made to Ofsted had already been identified by the Registered Manager. Actions are being taken to address these. Two recommendations are made as a result of these minor shortfalls. They do not, however, have an adverse impact on the safety or well-being of any young person living in this home and they do not detract from the outstanding quality of care and outstanding outcomes young people achieve while living in this home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home offers long-term care for up to seven children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. A private company operates this home alongside its other home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/02/2014	Interim	good progress
15/05/2013	Full	outstanding
09/01/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
26/07/2012	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 there is a written record of all medication, treatment and first aid given to children during their placement (NMS 6.15)
- ensure the registered person has a system in place to notify within 24 hours the persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events in accordance with Regulation 30 (NMS 24.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people make exceptional progress in this home in all aspects of their lives. One parent commented: 'The home has made a big difference to my daughter's life. She now has structure and her chances in later life have greatly improved.' Young people grow in confidence and they develop a range of life and social skills. As a result, their life chances are significantly improved.

Young people who have not previously attended school or achieved educationally do so while living in this home. All young people engage in full-time packages of education. All young people who have lived at the home for more than six months have progressed to attending mainstream schools and colleges. Their attendance and the academic progress young people make are exceptional. One young person said: 'I never had the opportunity to do well at school before. Now I plan to pass my GCSEs, go to college and become an actor.' This engagement in education enhances young people's sense of achievement and their opportunities and choices in adulthood are greatly improved.

Young people with complex emotional health needs have vastly improved physical and emotional health. Their physical health is enhanced by a healthy balanced diet and routine health checks. Their emotional health is enhanced by a range of specialist supports and therapies. A young person said: 'I have stopped taking drugs, I no longer drink alcohol and I have cut down on smoking. I feel much healthier and happier.' Young people are extremely well supported by staff following, and sometimes during, therapeutic sessions. Therapy and support help young people understand relationships and come to terms with their traumatic histories. This impacts positively in terms of their emotional well-being and ability to form appropriate relationships.

Young people benefit greatly from engaging in a wide range of community activities and new experiences while living in this home. A young person said: 'I go to youth club, dancing, horse riding, the cinema, and laser quest.' By engaging in their chosen activities, young people are assisted to make excellent progress emotionally, physically and socially. They make friends, they have fun, they develop self-confidence and they make a positive contribution to their community.

Relationships between young people and their families are supported extremely well in sometimes very difficult circumstances. This includes safeguarding concerns. Arrangements are negotiated and agreed very sensitively with placing social workers and in consultation with young people. Young people are clearly well listened to and their wishes in respect of who they see and who they do not, are highly respected. This allows young people's relationships to develop at a comfortable pace and helps improve to quality of family relationships. Improved relationships will hopefully help

young people to develop a more positive sense of identity. It also provides an opportunity for young people to have a family support network in the longer term.

Young people who previously frequently engaged in risk-taking and offending behaviour no longer do so after living in this home for a period of time. Incidents reduce in frequency and severity over time and in the vast majority of cases, they stop completely. Staff help young people to learn from incidents while thinking about the impact their behaviours have on others. This helps young people develop empathy and more socially acceptable behaviours.

Quality of care

outstanding

Young people have excellent relationships with staff and enjoy very good relationships with each other. A young person commented that, 'the staff make you want to be here, they really care and really listen and help'. The extremely positive relationships young people form with a consistent team of committed staff, and the emotionally warm and positive environment created by them, provide a secure emotional base from where young people can develop.

Young people receive very high standards of care and support because staff have an exceptionally good understanding of their complex individual needs. In addition, staff at all levels set very clear boundaries and have very high aspirations for young people. A social worker said, 'staff are committed and hard working, very supportive and encouraging and very sensitive to the young person's needs.' A young person said: 'The staff are very reliable and down to earth. They have taught me that I do not have to respond to others aggressively. I know that if I behave in a certain way, they will all respond in the same way.' Such supportive and consistent care enables young people to make excellent progress with their behaviour. As a result, young people are able to live together in a settled environment. This helps them emotionally by enhancing their sense of security and stability.

The manager and staff have extremely positive relationships with partner agencies. For example, excellent relationships with the local school and college enabled a number of young people to successfully make a transition into mainstream education. Positive relationships with health services have enabled young people to receive prompt appointments with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health team. Specialist support for young people in respect of substance misuse and their sexual health is also readily available. In circumstances when young people have required extremely specialist therapeutic support services, the manager has advocated on their behalf and challenged placing authorities when they do not deliver services in line with young people's needs and within their timescales. Such support provides young people with the best opportunity to address their difficulties and reach their full potential in the future.

Young people's care plans, risk assessments and associated care records are

exceptionally detailed and provide staff with clear guidance on how to meet their needs. Excellent staffing ratios also ensure that the care planned for young people can be consistently delivered to a very high standard. This, as well as excellent working relationships with partner agencies and regular staff meetings to monitor and review the progress young people are making, ensures that care plans remain effective and that consistent approaches to care are provided. This provides certainty for young people and impacts positively on their sense of safety and stability.

Staff are extremely proactive in ensuring that young people have access to appropriate, extensive and individualised leisure pursuits. All young people are engaged in a number of different leisure interests which they enjoy. As a group, they have participated in community events to raise money for charity. Young people benefit physically, emotionally and socially as a result of such participation. It also enables them to feel an integral part of their community. One young person said: 'I do rugby and Judo every week, I have good friends, I have sleepovers at their houses.'

A key strength of this home is its commitment to ensuring that the wishes and feelings of young people are sought and acted upon at all times. Young people are fully involved with the recruitment and interviewing of new staff. Their views and comments have been used and contribute to the home's development plan. Young people are fully involved in their care planning and in respect of choices regarding the day-to-day running of and decoration of their home. Young people attend regular house meetings and have the option of chairing these meetings. Young people very much feel part of all decision-making processes. One young person said: 'We have a big say in the running of our house. I have helped get Wi-Fi for the house, a trampoline and I have had three parties at the house which all my mates came to.' Young people feel valued and listened too. This helps raise their self-esteem and confidence.

The home is maintained to a high standard. It provides a very comfortable and homely environment. Young people's bedrooms are well equipped and personalised. Young people's achievements and activities are celebrated. All communal areas within the home are decorated with many photographs of young people engaging in activities, and with art-work and projects undertaken by them. This reminds young people of their achievements, helps them feel valued and further improves their self-esteem.

Medication practices within the home are safe. However, when young people refuse to take their medication, this is not consistently recorded. This shortfall does not have an adverse impact on the safety or well-being of young people and does not detract from the outstanding quality of care provided to young people.

Young people consistently state that they feel safe living in this home and they are all able to identify staff who they can talk to if they have worries or concerns. A young person said: 'The staff are outstanding. They are very good at keeping us safe, I now feel I can just go and talk to them and it really helps.' The emotionally and physically safe and secure environment provided for young people as well as robust safeguarding practices mean that young people have a strong sense of safety and well-being while living in this home.

Pre-placement impact risk assessments undertaken by the Registered Manager are extremely effective in ensuring that the mix of young people living in the home at any one time does not pose safeguarding risks to young people. Age and gender as well as the individual needs, risks and vulnerabilities of each young person are carefully considered and balanced alongside staffing numbers and skills. As a result, young people are well matched and well protected from any risks they may pose to each other. Bullying is not tolerated in the home. When young people join the home, they quickly learn the home's policy in respect of bullying and develop mutual respect and understanding for each other.

The manager has a robust understanding of safeguarding practice and the home has clear policies and procedures about safety. Staff receive excellent training and they are extremely aware of how to keep individual children safe. Comprehensive risk management strategies recognise the complex needs and vulnerabilities of young people in the home while supporting their development through engaging in positive pursuits in the community. Extensive work is undertaken with young people to assist them in understanding the risks others pose to them or the risks they may pose to themselves. This and the fact that young people are fully involved with decisions about their own safety means that they are much more likely to work within the guidelines of their risk assessment.

Despite young people having a significant history of going missing prior to living in this home, instances of missing from care are rare. Staff have an excellent understanding of the risks associated with each young person and supervise young people very closely. On the rare occasions when young people do go missing, staff robustly implement the home's missing from care procedures and young people are soon located and return to the home. Excellent support provided to young people after they have been welcomed back into the home significantly reduces the risk of further incidents occurring. A young person told me: 'When I returned, the staff were brilliant, they were so pleased to see me, we did lots of work on my safety and it has taught me that I want to stay here until I am 18.'

Behaviour is extremely well managed in the home through proactive strategies which engage young people in positive behaviours. These, and strategies to de-escalate challenging behaviour are effective. The use of consequences and physical intervention are low. Physical intervention is only used as a very last resort. Since the interim inspection, the requirement in respect of the recording of physical interventions has been met. There have been significant improvements in this area.

Recording is detailed and after any physical intervention or other significant event, young people are de-briefed and consulted with. This and the thorough analysis of the effectiveness of interventions by the deputy manager increase the capacity to improve practice further in this area.

The company has a robust recruitment and selection procedure for new staff. All staff have been recruited and checked appropriately. This ensures that only those people who are suitable to work with young people and do not pose a risk to their safety are employed.

The home is a physically safe and secure environment. All health and safety issues are addressed thoroughly. For example, a young person was able to advise me what to do in the event of a fire due to being involved in fire drills both during the day and night. Equipment in the home, including gas and electrical installations are checked and serviced at regular intervals. This contributes to young people's safety and well-being.

Leadership and management

outstanding

The Registered Manager is experienced and had been in post as the manager of this home for the last two years. He is working towards the completion of the required management qualification within the agreed timescales.

The home is extremely well managed by an exceptionally enthusiastic, committed and motivated manager. Parents, carers and young people state they cannot identify any shortfalls in the home. One carer stated: 'I have nothing but praise. I am so overwhelmed by the quality of care and the progress being made.' The Registered Manager's knowledge and insight in respect of the issues that affect young people living in the home and theories which underpin certain behaviours are excellent. He uses this knowledge and insight, alongside high levels of consultation with his staff, young people and stakeholders to constantly identify ways to further improve the quality of care and outcomes for young people. The home's development plan is detailed and has been actioned to improve consultation with young people, improve internal monitoring systems and to improve the outside area of the home.

Staff undertake a comprehensive programme of training which ensures that they are competent in meeting the individual needs of young people. For example, in addition to mandatory training, staff have recently undertaken training regarding attachment issues, neglect, substance misuse, young people who display sexually harmful behaviour, parental mental health, the toxic trio and advocacy. Updating medication training is also scheduled. Staff receive regular formal supervision and attend regular team meetings. In addition, the home has a well-resourced reading file which staff are encouraged to access. As a consequence of the training and excellent support provided to staff, young people benefit greatly from the care provided to them by skilled staff who are equipped to meet their needs.

Staff describe the management team as 'brilliant' and 'extremely supportive'. They are highly motivated by managers and leaders and staff morale is good. Staff turnover is extremely low and high staffing ratios ensure that young people are very well supported by a consistent and cohesive staff team. This in turn results in staff supporting young people very well and in an outstanding quality of care being maintained.

The home's Statement of Purpose provides clear and accurate information to parents and placing authorities about the care, support and services the home offers. Young people are provided with a guide so that they know what to expect when they come to live in the home. This guide is currently being updated and developed by the young people currently living in the home.

Managers and leaders comprehensively and effectively monitor the progress young people make while living in the home. Data in respect of young people's progress and patterns of behaviour are collected via young people's self-assessments alongside assessments undertaken by staff. Managers and leaders regularly analyse patterns and trends in behaviours. This ensures that young people's care plans and risk assessments remain effective and that changes are instigated to improve the quality and effectiveness of these plans. The management team is thus able to demonstrate very clearly the impact and value living at the home is having on young people's lives and how their life chances are significantly improving.

Quality assurance monitoring, both internally and externally, is effective in identifying strengths in the home as well as minor shortfalls. Improved consultation with young people, parents and stakeholders has resulted in monitoring reports being more rigorous and effective in driving improvements. This is indicative of a service which wants to continually assess, develop and improve practice so that young people achieve even better outcomes.

There is a system in place to notify authorities and Ofsted of all significant events relating to the protection of young people living at the home. While authorities are always informed without delay in respect of any significant incidents, there has, on occasion been times when there has been a delay in Ofsted receiving this information. As a result of the extremely robust reactions and responses of the Registered Manager and staff to significant incidents, this has not had an impact on the safety and welfare of young people. Neither does this detract from the excellent quality of care nor the outstanding outcomes young people continue to achieve while living in this home.

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.