

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC462809
Inspector	Rosie Davie
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	ERA Care Limited
Registered person address	Unit G22 Allen House The Maltings, Station Road Sawbridgeworth Hertfordshire CM21 9JX
Responsible individual	Stephen Milton
Registered manager	Francis Williams
Date of last inspection	14/05/2014

Inspection date	06/01/2015
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Previous inspection	declined in effectiveness
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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The staff aim to provide personalised and individualistic care. Staff emphasise building relationships as a vehicle to encouraging young people to accept support from both the team in the home and the external agencies supporting the placement.

External agencies describe the staff team as helpful and motivated to guide young people towards making positive social, lifestyle and educational choices.

The Registered Manager is experienced in caring for young people with challenging behaviours. A committed deputy and staff team who are caring and keen to achieve better outcomes for young people support him in his role.

The previous interim inspection identified a range of areas for improvement. The management team have worked to meet regulations and to develop practice. For example; there is a clear protocol for staff to follow when young people go missing and an admissions process now implemented.

This inspection identifies a range of areas to further develop good practice. Recommendations focus on raising expectations, implementing an education policy for the home, preparing young people under 16 for independence, clearly recording

physical intervention, evidencing prompt access to health appointments and monitoring the home's effectiveness through consultation.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is one of a group of homes run by an independent provider. This home offers care for up to three young people aged 11-18 with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/05/2014	Interim	declined in effectiveness
21/01/2014	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 this home has and is fully implementing, a written education policy that promotes and values children's education (NMS 8.5)
- ensure children and young people develop skills and emotional resilience that will prepare them for independent living (NMS 2.6)
- ensure that the home has high expectations of all children and staff (NMS 3.1)
- ensure staff who are trained in the use of physical restraint only use the homes agreed techniques, with specific reference to accurately recording the chosen intervention (NMS 3.15)
- ensure children and young people have prompt access to doctors and health professionals and that arrangements are clearly recorded (NMS 6.4)
- ensure that children and young people who are under 16 receive care which helps them to prepare for and supports them into adulthood (NMS 12.1)

- ensure the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. This includes developing a system for evaluating feedback following consultation with young people and key stakeholders. (NMS 21.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Young people come to this home because agencies have previously evidenced significant concerns about safety and risk taking behaviours. Social workers spoken to generally have a positive view of the relationships young people develop with staff. Young people spoken to and observations during inspection show that young people are talking to staff about what they are doing and where they are going which, for most is an improvement in the area of personal safety.

Young people continue to engage in some risk taking behaviours placing themselves at risk of harm and conviction. One young person said: 'I was arrested by the police but when I came back home the staff made time to talk to me about what had happened. They made sure I was okay. They want better for me. I have never had that before.'

Attendance at education relates to young people's circumstances. Where young people are receiving home or external tutoring they are encouraged to attend. Staff accompany young people to and from school when they are enrolled out of the local area. This helps to build relationships and supports achievement for some young people. Some young people are engaging with staff but not attending education. One young person said: 'Sometimes some staff and I play a game. We choose random words and I write a story for them.' Some staff are creative and imaginative. However, there is not a consistent approach within the home for helping young people who are not attending school or education full time. Missed opportunities to engage young people in home based educational activities impacts on young people's ability to recognise their educational potential.

Young people benefit from significant contact with others who are important to them. They are proactively encouraged to maintain or build relationships with family, friends and those who are significant. This helps young people to develop a positive self-view and to understand their culture and background. For some young people increased contact results in returning to live with family.

At 16, young people follow a pathway plan. This helps older young people to prepare and practice for independence. Whilst young people under 16 are encouraged to take part in individual food preparation and some basic household management tasks, the approach is not coordinated or linked to developing a suite of practical or emotional skills to prepare for independent living or adulthood. This means that young people miss out on opportunities to prepare towards the move to adulthood and leaving care.

Quality of care

adequate

Staff develop positive relationships with young people. Staff are interested in the young people and interact in a friendly manner often using humour to move discussion on. One young person said: 'The staff are really easy to talk to and they always make time to talk to me about how I am feeling. Day or night I know that I can go to any of them and they will listen to me.'

External agencies spoken to describe the care provided as 'stable and safe.' One representative said: 'Staff do their best to engage with young people who can be challenging and have had a number of failed placements.'

Young people choose their key worker. Staff are responsible for organising individual key time and recording discussions linked to the placement plan aims and objectives. Staff organise residents meetings, creating opportunities for individual young people to meet with staff or groups of their choice to discuss any current issues. For example one young person said: 'I think that it is unfair that internet access is restricted and I have raised this with the managers in the home.' Meetings enable young people to have their say and provide opportunity for developing understanding about why it is not possible for staff and managers to act upon their wishes in all cases.

Information about how to make a complaint is available. On arrival, staff provide young people with a guide which gives information about what to expect from living at the home. Staff arrange for young people to access external advocates; for example, to provide additional support regarding sexual identity. This means that young people are in contact with a range of agencies where they can discuss individual issues. During an induction process, staff talk to young people about the running of the home. The result is that young people know about the rules within the home, and how to access additional support.

Staff arrange for young people to attend a range of services to meet their health needs such as doctor, dentist and optician. However, appointments are not clearly recorded which creates confusion about whether access to services has been promptly actioned. The looked after children's nurse contacts the home. They provide advice and information which is helpful in supporting the staff's messages to young people about healthy lifestyle. The home does not have direct access to psychological services. However, in addition to joint work with partner agencies, staff support referrals made to child and mental health services. This means that young people are able to adequately access services to meet their physical or emotional needs.

Staff encourage young people to become involved in a range of activities appropriate to their age and interest; for example, the gym, football and boxing. Staff spend time with them, playing board games and pool, which young people enjoy.

The home sits within a residential area. The premises provide ample and appropriate

space for young people living there.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people and those spoken to representing external agencies say that young people are safe and feel safe in this home.

The numbers of unauthorised absences are high for some young people and others go missing on occasion. There are good links with the local police and staff are clear about the action to take and record if a young person goes missing. The local community police officer visits the home to speak with staff and this helps to keep young people safe. When young people are missing and this is unauthorised, staff stay in telephone contact with the young person or their family. Staff and managers talk to young people about returning to the home and offer to collect young people through the night or to meet them at a place of safety, for example a local police station. The management team works closely with partner agencies to ensure that all are aware of the young person's whereabouts. Managers and staff take forward any concerns they have with other professionals about young people's safety. They make positive contributions to strategy discussions where significant concern arises. This enables agencies to work together to keep young people safe in the wider community.

Managers have good insight into how young people express their feelings and anxieties. They complete and review detailed individualised behaviour management plans. This helps staff to understand the best approach for helping young people to modify their behaviour. Staff aim to promote positive behaviour and use sanctions to encourage young people to take responsibility for their actions. Relationships between young people are risk assessed, which guides staff towards diffusing any potential conflict. Young people spoken to do not identify bullying as an issue. Records sampled show that incidents between young people are not concluded. This implies that the staff do not expect young people to interact positively as a group or with one another.

Staff are trained in restraint and attend refresher training. Restraint is an occasional occurrence and used only to keep those involved safe from harm. Staff complete records following incidents however, they do not consistently describe the technique used when placing hands on a young person. This is an area for improvement.

The organisation carefully selects and recruits staff to work in the home. Interviews include questions formulated by the young people for example: 'Will you buy me alcohol?' This raises prospective employee's awareness of some young people's issues. Safe recruitment pre-employment checks are completed. All new staff receive

an induction and regular supervision within their probationary period. All staff access training in safeguarding. This helps to ensure the suitability of adults working with the young people.

Staff complete regular health and safety checks around the premises. Fire safety checks are consistently completed and staff time fire drills to include young people. Young people experience health and safety induction when they first come to live at the home. As a result, young people spoken to have an appropriate understanding of risk and the action they are required to take in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

adequate

The Registered Manager is experienced and knowledgeable. He divides his time between two homes. He has been the manager for this home since it opened in 2013. The deputy manager works closely with the Registered Manager and effectively runs the home in his absence. The Registered Manager has previous experience of working with young people living in residential care. He demonstrates understanding and is motivated to support young people to access their individual rights and achieve their potential. The Registered Manager completed the required level five management diploma in health and social care in December 2014.

The home's Statement of Purpose provides detailed information about the ethos and objectives of the home. The recent comprehensive update reflects regulatory requirements. This provides key stakeholders with specific information about the home's approach and the resources available to support young people in placement.

The home has good relationships with immediate neighbours. However, since the last inspection there has been one complaint from a member of public within the local community. The management team took the complaint seriously, resulting in the young person making a formal apology. This helps young people to develop an awareness of the impact of their behaviour within the community in which they live.

The management team have met the requirements and recommendations from the last interim inspection. Together the Registered Manager and deputy can evidence examples of improvements in the running of the home. They have very recently introduced a template to track the monthly key performance indicators for example, numbers of missing from home and numbers of restraint. The home has a selection of feedback forms completed by young people and parents. However, there is no central system for managers to coordinate consultation with key stakeholders or to evaluate survey responses.

Staff receive regular formal supervision and have consistent access to the management team. This helps staff to understand their role and responsibilities. Staff have the opportunity to attend a range of courses and to access e-learning. For example; child protection, child sexual exploitation and first aid. There is an

expectation from managers that staff attend training and keep learning up to date. This means that young people are cared for by knowledgeable staff.

Managers share information relating to significant events with other agencies and parents in a timely manner. Follow up action happens alongside discussion with key stakeholders, which strengthens partnership working.

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.