

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC355902
Inspector	Stephen Collett / Paul Taylor
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered manager	Andrew Brett Roberts
Date of last inspection	26/03/2014

Inspection date	02/10/2014
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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 receive good quality of care, based on planning which recognises individual needs of young people. The home utilises the expertise of a range of professionals to ensure placement plans reflect the vulnerabilities and developmental needs of each young person. Consequently, most young people make real progress and benefit from improved outcomes, taking into account the disadvantages they have experienced.

Young people express satisfaction with the quality of care they receive. Most feel well supported in all aspects of their lives. Difficult areas, for example bullying and going missing are handled thoughtfully by the home and young people generally accept support and learn to modify their behaviour.

Staff are familiar with the needs of young people, and benefit from having good access to specialised advice and guidance. They are therefore able to respond and interact with young people in ways that reflect the therapeutic ethos of the home. Many young people respond well to this, and build warm, friendly and supportive relationships with staff.

Leaders and managers have a clear vision for the home, and express a determination to fully embed the homes therapeutic approach to delivering care and

support for young people at significant risk. The only area requiring attention following this inspection is in the full recording of sanctions including their effectiveness.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The setting offers care and accommodation for up to six females aged from 8 to 17 years. Children and young people are normally placed at the home for medium- to long-term periods, although emergency and short-term placements are also provided. The home is run by a private organisation.

This inspection was undertaken over two days, 1 and 2 October and then a second inspector completed the inspection on the 2 December 2014.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/03/2014	Interim	good progress
07/08/2013	Full	good
08/01/2013	Interim	good progress
27/06/2012	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
17B (2001)	ensure that the record of sanctions includes the effectiveness and any consequence of the use of the measure. (Regulation 17B (3) (f))	31/12/2014

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people living at the home have experienced significant disruption in their lives, and have had a number of different care placements. Most young people make progress in overcoming these disadvantages and some begin to develop increased emotional resilience. Some young people make significant progress and have been able to make the transition to foster care or a return to their family. For others, progress has not been sustained and alternative placements have been made.

All young people at the home attend education and generally demonstrate more settled behaviour and better engagement in lessons. Progress has been particularly significant for one young person, and there has been a successful transition to mainstream school. Other young people have benefitted from developing their practical and artistic skills, and this has led to increased self-esteem.

Most young people gain a better understanding of key health risks, and appreciate the benefits of a healthy diet and cessation from smoking. Young people who misuse substances engage with support services and have made progress in addressing the issue.

The home cares for young people who often have a history of going missing from care and placing themselves in unsafe situations. Young people are supported to address this behaviour, and many are able to reduce the frequency and severity of their risk taking behaviours.

Many young people benefit from improved relationships with family members, and enjoy positive contact where appropriate. Young people have also been able to rebuild relationships with former carers and some begin to overcome the sense of rejection experienced when these placements broke down

Young people respond positively to opportunities to acquire practical and life skills, and where this happens, young people develop a growing sense of readiness for independence.

Arrangements are in place to facilitate young people making a positive contribution to the home. Young people do not display a high level of commitment to attending young people's house meetings, and managers have recognised this and recently introduced more creative ways of securing young people's engagement.

Quality of care **good**

The home is located on the perimeter of a medium size town, and there is easy access to all local amenities. The front of the house is adjacent to a major busy road, and this has been taken into account in the associated risk assessments. Young people live in a spacious, well-maintained and well-furnished home and all necessary domestic appliances are provided. Many photographs of the young people displayed around the home give a positive message that the young people are valued. Bedrooms are well furnished, and young people take advantage of the opportunity to personalise their own space.

The group dynamics have at times been difficult. The view was expressed by young people and some professionals that relationships have become more positive following changes in the group living at the home.

Young people are made aware at their point of admission of how they can make complaints and to whom. They are provided with information both in their young person's booklet and available in one of the lounges about independent advocates and other agencies to whom they can complain or approach for support. Formal complaints are rarely made, the young people instead preferring to communicate their dissatisfaction directly with members of staff in key work sessions, young people's meetings or in day to day interactions. This means that issues can be resolved at a low level without recourse to a formal process.

The detailed placement plans in place recognise the individual needs of all young people. These plans benefit from the input of the homes clinical psychologist, who facilitates a psychometric assessment of all young people on admission. Placement plans are regularly discussed in child-focused meetings involving all staff, and then amended where appropriate. This approach ensures young people benefit from consistent care from all staff.

Interactions observed between staff and young people during the inspection were warm and friendly, with staff maintaining consistent and appropriate boundaries. All young people spoken to during the inspection identified positively in their relationships with staff. Minor grumbles were brought to the registered manager's attention, who gave assurances these would be addressed.

The home provides access to a wide range of services to promote positive outcomes for young people. Through its own internal provision, several therapeutic interventions can be easily accessed, although not all young people choose to engage in these services. The home is also building a partnership with a voluntary organisation delivering training and individual support to young people at risk of sexual exploitation and missing from care. In addition, the home has worked effectively with substance misuse agencies to support young people experiencing difficulties.

Staff pro-actively support young people's educational attainment by maintaining positive links with schools and colleges and providing young people with practical

support to attend. Staff take an interest in young people's achievements and encourage them with incentives to do well.

Young people are able to take part in a variety of enriching activities. These include activities for the whole group, such as bowling and the cinema and days out and holidays away during school holidays. There are activities in which individuals also participate, for example boxing and horse riding. This ensures that they can improve their confidence and self-esteem and widen their circle of friends.

A new system for the safe administration and recording of medication has recently been introduced at the home. These arrangements are safe and effective and implementation has been satisfactory.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Bullying in the home has occurred and been addressed. While group dynamics are at times volatile, members of staff ensure that close supervision of the young people enables conflict to be addressed. On occasion young people have become physically aggressive to each other and these incidents have been swiftly contained by staff. Regular meetings with key workers enable young people to discuss their feelings about their peers and to discuss strategies if they are finding the relationship challenging. Additionally, the young people have the opportunity to meet in the young person's meetings to discuss behaviours and dynamics. Young people said that there is bullying on occasion but that, 'the staff sort it out', and 'they're quite good really.'

Many of the young people living at the home have a history of going missing from care when they are admitted, and this partly accounts for the high number of unauthorised absences and missing incidents recorded at the home. Some young people significantly reduce the frequency of missing episodes, but for others the level of unauthorised absence and missing remains high.

There are individual protocols for the staff to follow in the event that a young person is absent from the home without permission. These outline who is to be informed and at what point they should be reported missing to the police. Members of staff are aware of the protocols and the individual vulnerabilities of the young people in their care. They ensure that they liaise promptly with the police in the event that a young person is missing. Police officers have commented positively about how the home has improved its performance in this area and that they have confidence in the home's approach.

On return from being missing members of staff will spend time with the young people to explore the reasons for them being missing and how to avoid repetitions of the behaviour.

Behaviour management strategies are in place for all young people, and 'boundary agreements' made between staff and young people ensure expectations of behaviour are clear. An incentive and reward scheme is in place to promote positive behaviour, and young people generally respond well to this. Risk assessments are in place which reflect young people's individual vulnerabilities, and these are regularly reviewed and updated.

Where sanctions have been imposed, the young people have the opportunity to comment and sign the record made. There is no record of the effectiveness of the sanction and this could make it difficult to assess whether the sanction is having an impact on reducing the presenting behaviour.

Restraint is used as a last resort, and only when young people are placing themselves or others at risk of harm. Incidents are well recorded and this complies with regulation. A young person expressed the view that restraint is used only when necessary, and it is implemented safely. All staff receive training in how to use appropriate restraint techniques.

Safe recruitment processes are in place to ensure unsuitable individuals are not employed in the home. While some recruitment information is not kept on paper files, the registered individual explained that records of some referee discussions are kept on computer files.

The home provides a safe environment for young people, with all appliances regularly tested and health and safety risk assessments regularly reviewed. Fire alarms are tested and fire drills, involving young people, take place regularly.

Leadership and management

good

The manager has worked at the home for eighteen months and became the registered manager in October 2013. He has significant previous experience of managing children's homes, although he does not hold a formal qualification. He is currently undertaking the level 5 diploma in management, and hopes to complete this by July 2015. Recommendations made at the last inspection have been acted upon.

Leaders and managers evaluate, and seek to improve upon, practice in the home. Since the last inspection the home has produced a development plan which identifies priorities for improving practice still further. The registered manager acknowledges that the plan will become a more effective tool for continuous improvement by introducing timescales for completing the actions identified in the plan.

The home has a comprehensive statement of purpose which emphasises the therapeutic ethos of the home and the likely vulnerabilities of the client group admitted to the home. The statement makes reference to specialist training the staff

receive in order to meet the needs of the young people. This has recently been delivered and ensures staff have greater insight into the range of issues young people bring.

The home has appointed a new Regulation 33 visitor as the previous one had a relative join the staff team. The Responsible Individual was aware of this situation and has ensured that a new independent visitor has been recruited. As a result, there is no conflict of interest for this individual and their independence cannot be called into question.

Leaders and managers are pro-active in ensuring the home is sufficiently resourced, and there are sufficient staff to care for the young people. Staff feel well supported and benefit from a comprehensive induction programme when they commence work at the home. A good range of training opportunities are provided, both on-line and through training workshops. The home's clinical psychologist delivers cognitive behaviour therapy training to staff, and facilitates weekly sessions to help staff develop their practice. The clinical psychologist's regular presence in the home enables staff to easily access advice and guidance in relation to their interactions with young people.

The deputy manager has recently taken on responsibility for the supervision of all care staff. Members of staff report that they feel very well supported by their managers and that they receive regular good quality supervision. Records seen of supervision sessions were clear and detailed and explored both performance and the quality of work of each member of staff. The sessions also explore how they are feeling about their work and how their role affects them personally. This underpins staff feeling supported and also being accountable for practice.

Leaders and managers generally have good relations with external agencies, and social workers speak positively of the communication maintained with the home. The registered manager has successfully engaged an external voluntary agency to provide specialised support for young people vulnerable to sexual exploitation. This developing partnership has also resulted in bespoke, specialised training being delivered.

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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