

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	10/11/2015
Unique reference number	SC047894
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Care Focus Limited
Registered person address	Care Focus Ltd, 3rd Floor, 24 Chiswell Street, LONDON, EC1Y 4YX

Responsible individual	Jean Lloyd
Registered manager	Paula Warren
Inspector	Fiona Littlefield

Inspection date	10/11/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC047894

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people make progress because they feel safe and are safe. Risks are carefully assessed and managed.
- Young people benefit from being looked after by staff who balance the need for consistent routines with a warm and nurturing approach.
- Good quality plans integrate education and care needs. A dynamic and experienced staff group support educational attendance and achievement. Young people have access to a wide range of educational options, which helps them to prepare for the future. They have started to consider possible careers for the first time.
- Staff and managers are skilled and persistent in establishing good partnership arrangements. They have established good working relationships with parents and local authorities and make sure that everyone is included.
- The registered manager is energetic and purposeful. She is very child centred. Staff and managers are insightful and empathetic and ambitious for young people. They work as a team to continuously review and improve the service.
- This inspection identified some shortfalls in relation to external monitoring of the service and planning of supervision sessions for staff. The management team are aware of these and is taking action. These matters are not currently having an impact on the safety and well-being of young people.

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

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 (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. (Regulation 44(1))	11/12/2015

Recommendations

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

Ensure that there is a workforce plan, which gives details of timescales for supervision of practice with particular reference to planning individual sessions. (Guide to the Quality Standards, page 53 paragraph 10.8)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is one of a group, run by an independent provider. Staff offer care and support for up to four young women. Teachers provide education within the setting. Direct therapeutic support is available for each young person to access.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
10/12/2014	Full	Good
11/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress
03/10/2013	Full	Adequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Good</p>
<p>Young people make progress because they benefit from close and warm relationships with staff who care about them and who take every opportunity to get to know them better. Staff understand that young people will challenge them but also need reassurance. One member of staff said: 'If someone is behaving very badly, I make a point of going to sit with her. I want to make sure that she knows that I am not intimidated.'</p> <p>Mealtimes are particularly important occasions, when staff and young people get together to discuss the day's events and talk about new initiatives. For instance, the registered manager has taken the opportunity to introduce subjects such as menus, choice of school uniforms and a new initiative to include young people's questions into staff recruitment. This means that they feel listened to, taken seriously and included in the running of the home.</p> <p>Each young person has a team of three key workers, who ensure consistency of care. Each young person is expected to engage with a worker once a week for an individual session and the team meets once a month to consider progress and raise any concerns. The monthly report goes to the manager and the local authority social worker. Staff acknowledge that young people can feel pushed by this but they accept it and it is part of the reason that they make progress; they are supported to confront issues and build up self-esteem. Equally, staff are skilled and resourceful and make the most of informal unplanned opportunities to speak to young people, with remarkable results. One member of staff said: 'Any member of staff will use an opportunity to talk to young people. I have had some good conversations about appropriate relationships or drugs when we are washing up. This builds up their confidence in you.'</p> <p>Education is the clearest way of monitoring a young person's progress in the home and is fully integrated into their care plan, with education and care staff working closely together. Education takes place in a separate unit within the grounds. Young people have a school uniform, which they chose themselves and which staff wash and press for them. Levels of attendance are very high, which is striking progress given their starting points.</p> <p>Education staff and managers acknowledge that young people may have missed long periods of education and may struggle with complex and problematic histories. However, staff are completely committed to making the most of time available. The head of education said: 'It is all about outcomes. We must equip</p>	

young people for when they leave us and are not in care.'

Young people have individually tailored education plans, which can include core academic subjects such as English, maths, science and humanities and vocational studies such as health and social care. They can also access alternative education courses in subjects such as animal care and health and beauty. Some young people have gone to work experience in the local area. For many young people who have never considered planning their future, these experiences have been a revelation and staff are ambitious for them. One member of staff said: 'I told her that she didn't need to turn to crime to earn money. If she trained and qualified, she could have her own beauty salon one day.'

Staff and managers take every opportunity to prepare young people for taking on personal responsibilities, so they have chores to do, such as putting their washing in the machine, cleaning their rooms and changing their beds. The registered manager said: 'We don't want this to be deadly, it is just a way of helping them understand that domestic routines are part of life.' Young people respond to this well, gaining confidence as they learn to take new experiences in their stride.

Staff balance routines and chores with relaxing and having fun, all while being safe. All community based activities are fully risk assessed and young people are accompanied at all times. Given that many young people have a history of going missing, the staff work closely with local authority social workers to establish a robust plan. A member of staff said: 'The goal is to give them a secure base, which includes managing being in the community safely.'

Staff and managers are fully committed to supporting contact with families. Parents speak highly of the support they receive from staff. The parent of one young person said: 'Once, I rang staff while she was here as I was a bit scared and they talked me through it. She overheard and realised that the home were in touch and calmed down.' Staff also host family contact at the home, assist with transport and take young people to their home addresses as part of an agreed contact plan. Some young people are supported to use public transport so they can visit their families.

On occasion, even the most carefully prepared arrangements have gone wrong. It is striking that in many cases, it is the young people who alert staff if they have put themselves at risk, knowing that this may lead to a restriction of their contact arrangements. The registered manager said: 'Many young people who come here have never trusted anyone in their lives. Here, they learn that some people do what they say they will do and follow up.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>Staff and managers place safeguarding at the heart of the service they provide. Many young people have a history of complex, risk taking behaviours. Staff and managers are confident that they could respond appropriately to any child protection concerns or allegations. Staff receive regular, up to date training on issues such internet safety and child sexual exploitation. As a result, from the outset, young people are looked after by a group of professionals who are secure in their practice and prioritise their safety.</p> <p>The registered manager considers all potential referrals both in terms of risk taking behaviours and the likely impact of a new arrival on the existing group of young people. She approaches this thoroughly, matching risks with management strategies. The individual plans for each young person are developed according to their needs. This includes their personal behaviour support plan, as well as risk assessments for activities and night time routines. These assessments are reviewed every month and this is passed onto the allocated social worker. This means that any progress that young people make is recognised immediately, which enhances their self-esteem. For instance, staff noted in a monthly report that a young person: ‘...made significant progress in curtailing her use of bad language and now manages herself in a more appropriate manner, she can de-escalate herself when upset.’</p> <p>On occasion, young people can resort to challenging behaviour and staff appreciate that this often reflects inner turmoil and insecurity. There is an emphasis on establishing warm and loving relationships and applying rules and boundaries consistently, so young people always know what to expect. For instance, there is a clear expectation that they attend school so they are ready and dressed in their school uniforms, having had breakfast ten minutes before school starts. This is particularly important for any new arrivals. One member of staff said: ‘She could see what the others were doing and followed the crowd.’</p> <p>Many of the young people have to learn new and more successful ways to manage conflict. Staff and managers use the techniques which work best for each young person including de-escalation, distraction and humour. Even so, staff show remarkable resilience and strong nerves in confronting troubled young people. One staff member said: ‘We never reward poor behaviour. If someone is swearing at me, I don’t react but I don’t inflame it either.’</p> <p>The frequency of physical restraint is very low and many young people have not required this at all. Sanctions are used and managers monitor to establish effectiveness. In all cases, staff record young people’s views. There is an emphasis on reparation, encouraging young people to consider the consequences of their</p>	

actions. Staff and managers are especially sensitive to any hint of bullying behaviour, which is dealt with promptly and robustly. This means that young people develop self-awareness and a sense of responsibility for their actions.

Staff and managers always reward good behaviour and like to celebrate any achievement. Various visual tools are used skilfully to help young people focus on the message that their behaviour is important and can have consequences. For instance, young people can earn points for completing their daily routines, which can be added towards a weekend activity. Equally they can lose them for poor behaviour such as swearing. Young people can earn a gold star, particularly where it reflects improved behaviour or an act of kindness or empathy. This balanced approach whereby young people are treated with respect and understanding leads to periods of sustained and improved behaviour.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>The registered manager has been in post for over two years and has recently gained her level five qualification. Working alongside a deputy manager, she provides a clear and robust sense of purpose and direction for staff and young people. This is reflected in the minutes of weekly staff meetings, where she emphasises the importance of using time positively: 'If anyone has a grievance, please deal with it correctly. No negativity at work.' Young people benefit from this confident role modelling from staff, where routine is balanced with a warm, caring and nurturing approach.</p> <p>Currently, nearly half of the staff team have a level three qualification, while the other half are on this course or preparing to start. This indicates a high regard for professional training in the home and an acknowledgment that it provides a useful analytical and theoretical framework for staff who work under pressure.</p> <p>All staff receive a period of mandatory training when they start work in the home and this is refreshed annually. A clear training matrix indicates when staff are booked into courses. This is easy to use and helpful for planning and ensures that staff have the skills that they need to continue working with young people.</p> <p>Staff are committed, creative and resilient in the face of unpredictable behaviour. They work as a team, prioritising handover time and staff meetings to ensure that they deliver consistent care. They speak highly of the manager, who is calm and resourceful under pressure. Staff confirm that they receive supervision that is structured and supportive, recognising the impact that such demanding work can have on them. However, the supervision schedule is not up to date and needs</p>	

completing and planning ahead. The registered manager is aware of this shortfall and has begun to develop a new process to plan supervision in advance.

The registered manager understands the importance of maintaining a regular overview of the quality of care in the home. Information concerning the young people is taken from a range of sources, including educational attendance and attainment and feedback from monthly meetings and statutory reviews. The manager also consider messages from the meetings held by staff and young people, including any complaints. Staff recruitment practices are being reviewed and updated. Professionals speak very highly of the level of partnership working. One social worker said: 'It is not just about keeping me informed but making sure that everyone is talking to one another. This is a very powerful message to young people.'

Staff and managers are ambitious for their service. The registered manager uses staff meetings to keep staff informed and updated on a range of topics including risk assessments and new legislation. The manager has written a new development plan for the home, updating existing goals and identifying new objectives, such as expanding opportunities for young people to participate in care leaver's forums.

External monitoring has not provided an up to date commentary on activity in the home. Senior managers are aware that this is essential so that managers can address any shortfalls in a timely fashion and are addressing this.

Staff are confident and effective in developing contacts with a range of people, including families and the local authority when a new person joins the home, even in an emergency. Young people benefit from immediate and authoritative responses, which helps them to settle quickly.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

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