

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	10/11/2015
Unique reference number	1155757
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Stephanie Scott
Inspector	Nick Murphy

Inspection date	10/11/2015
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
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

1155757

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Staff have a thorough understanding of young people's needs. These are addressed through detailed and relevant care plans which fully involve young people themselves. Some particularly good work with young people and their families has resulted in extremely positive outcomes in improving contact.
- The quality of relationships between staff and young people is good. Young people know that staff are completely honest with them and have their welfare at heart. This enables staff to support young people more effectively.
- Some young people's behaviour is challenging and they resist the efforts of staff to help them. This does not deter staff from continuing to provide a high standard of care and finding different ways to gain young people's cooperation.
- Young people's behaviour has placed them at risk of significant harm. In particular, there has been a high level of young people going missing. Staff are very proactive in managing these incidents. They work extremely well with other agencies to ensure that risks are reduced to an acceptable level.
- Leadership and management is sound. Staff are committed to the home's ethos of putting the child's needs first, and put it into practice in their daily work. There are some shortfalls in practice but they do not deter from the home's overall quality of service.

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 no measure of control or discipline includes imposing a financial penalty, other than a requirement for the payment of a reasonable sum (which may be by instalments) by way of reparation. (Regulation 19(2)(f))	05/12/2015

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. In particular, that the management of risks in relation to the use of mobile phones is clearly set out in children's case files. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 42 paragraph 9.5)
- Ensure that the workforce plan is updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 53 paragraph 10.8)
- Ensure that the home provides a domestic and homely environment. Specifically, that young people are not required to sign documents such as pocket money records and key worker sessions, and that staff carry keys more discreetly. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 15 paragraph 3.9)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides accommodation for up to three children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a local authority.

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>This is the home's first full inspection since it was registered in May 2015. The Registered Manager, staff and young people moved here as a group from another site. The quality of the premises is excellent, providing good facilities and suitable privacy for young people. It is located within a small town community, with good access to all services. This helps young people to feel more connected to wider society.</p> <p>Staff have a very thorough knowledge of young people's needs. These are described in detailed care plans which set out the actions required to meet those needs and achieve progress. Senior staff do a monthly audit of young people's plans. This assures quality, for example, by ensuring that agreed tasks are not overlooked. Young people have full involvement in their plans. One wrote on theirs, 'I have read this through and I accept it, though I don't like the use of abbreviations because I don't understand some of them.' There is a note underneath by one of the staff saying that he had explained the abbreviations to the young person and they were happy.</p> <p>When a young person is being considered for admission, staff gather detailed information through discussions with social worker, parents and the young person themselves. This enables staff to make an informed assessment of the potential impact of the young person upon the group and vice versa. A programme of introductions and visits ensures that the young person (and the existing group) are prepared with as little anxiety as possible. Monitoring and review of young people's placements by the Registered Manager and placing authority is ongoing. This means that if any young person's progress is compromised by a new arrival, work is done (including the review of young people's plans) to minimise the impact.</p> <p>For most of the time staff enjoy good relationships with young people. At times, young people are uncooperative and abusive, but staff maintain their patience, warmth and tolerance. Young people clearly perceive the positive regard that staff have for them. They develop trust in staff, knowing that they will, 'tell it like it is'. One young person needed to be given a difficult message about a major change to their plan. The Registered Manager and another member of staff had a lengthy discussion with them and went through the rationale for the decision. Some amendments to the timescale for the change were agreed and a potentially difficult reaction was avoided.</p> <p>Overall, most young people make good progress, albeit with some backward steps</p>	

from time to time. Some have done outstandingly well. One young person who recently left improved their education attendance from virtually nil to one hundred percent (gaining a 'pupil of the year' award), and reduced their cannabis use. They returned home in accordance with their plan, their social worker commenting, 'The work the staff did with the young person and the relationship they formed with mum was just brilliant. This made the reunification plan work.'

Staff consult with young people about the day-to-day decisions within the home, such as menu choice and how they want their bedrooms to be furnished. They were heavily involved in the planning for the move from the old premises. As a result, the building is comfortable, attractive and homely. Some aspects of practice are institutional, such as staff requiring young people to sign for their pocket money, and staff carrying their keys on large belt clips. Although young people frequently prefer to spend time with their friends in the community, they are able to go on trips and outings with staff. In the summer holidays they had a particularly enjoyable short break at an activity centre, giving them new experiences and boosting their confidence.

Staff are particularly supportive of young people's need to keep in touch with parents. They work with parents and social workers to build up young people's relationships with their family. They ensure that such contact is safely managed, sometimes undertaking to supervise this when necessary. The skills of the staff in this area is reflected in the fact that all young people significantly increase both the quantity and quality of their contact with parents. This enhances young people's sense of identity and builds sound foundations for the young person to successfully return home.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
<p>Staff clearly see keeping young people safe as their primary task. They assess all risks to individual young people and review them regularly to ensure that any new information is taken account of. The use of social media has been a particular threat to the safety of young people who currently live here. They have been able to contact young people and adults outside the home who pose risks to them. Staff have been proactive in reviewing young people's access to social media and updating risk assessments, but measures to control these risks have not always been consistently applied. As a result, some young people have been able to continue contacting inappropriate individuals by other means.</p> <p>The home has experienced a great deal of variation in the frequency of young people going missing. Staff achieved notable success with one young person who</p>	

went from 30 missing episodes per month when they first came to live here to nil in the last year of their placement. Currently, there is a high level of such incidents. However, staff are extremely conscientious in reducing risk to young people when they are away. They follow them, keep them in sight, and persuade them to return (usually successfully). They keep in touch by mobile phone, and contact parents and other people they might be with. They also work extremely effectively with local police. One officer said, 'We have a very good relationship with staff, we visit often so we know the young people. Staff are really proactive in going after and looking for young people when they are absent. They also provide us with good intelligence about any suspicious happenings in the area, such as vehicles spotted loitering.' Staff attend regular multi-agency meetings to discuss the young people's safety and agree strategies to protect them more effectively. A social worker said, 'Staff go above and beyond in managing young people who go missing. They are very clued up and work effectively with all agencies. This greatly reduces the risk that young people will be sexually exploited.'

Staff evaluate missing person episodes and have begun to compile monthly reports which are discussed in care planning meetings. This enables those responsible for the young person to identify patterns and trends, and so avoid similar situations in the future. These meetings include parents and the young person, giving them ownership of the concerns and seeking their ideas on how to reduce this behaviour. Following the return of young people from being absent, they are seen in every instance by an independent social worker or their assistant. This is a significant additional safeguard for young people. These workers also have regular meetings with staff where they share information, for example, the local 'hotspots' where young people in the community gather.

Staff manage young people's behaviour effectively. Staff respond patiently to disruptive or abusive behaviour, using their good relationships with young people to restore calm. Later, they help young people to reflect on what they have done and tease out the underlying reasons why they may have acted inappropriately. A social worker said, 'Staff manage behaviours really well. I have a clear sense that they sit down and talk to young people after an incident, and discuss what has happened. This promotes young people's safety and enhances their self-worth.' The need to use physical restraint is extremely rare. Staff sometimes use sanctions, and evaluate how effective they have been. There have been two occasions when staff have stopped young people's pocket money for smoking in their rooms. This is contrary to children's homes regulations.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of	good

leaders and managers	
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The Registered Manager is suitably experienced and is working towards the required qualification which she expects to complete within the next six months.

She has a well-established team of staff who are committed to the home's ethos and apply it in their work with young people. Staff meetings take place regularly, most of the discussion being focused on the young people. The Registered Manager recently organised a team development day, where individual staff researched information on the children's homes quality standards and presented to the group. This kind of work provides staff with the underpinning knowledge they need to maintain consistent, high-quality care.

The home is organised efficiently and effectively. Documents and records are well-maintained. In particular, young people's case files are tidy and kept up to date. This makes them accessible to young people and encourages them to read their records and contribute to them if they wish.

Staff are well supported through regular supervision, appraisal and training. This helps them to care for young people effectively, promote their welfare and keep them safe. In addition to the core training which is regularly refreshed (such as fire safety, first aid and behaviour management) there is a range of other learning opportunities. These are sometimes commissioned in response to young people's particular needs, for example, in attachment, or sexual health. These training courses are not recorded in a systematic way within a workforce development plan. This makes it more difficult for the Registered Manager to have an overview of the staff group's skills and knowledge and identify any deficits.

Staff have a good understanding of the progress that young people make. Weekly reports on each young person are detailed, and shared with placing social workers. This enables changes to be made to the young person's plan to overcome any barriers to achieving better outcomes or safety. Staff work extremely well with other agencies and services. Social workers, independent reviewing officers and other professionals have all commented favourably on the quality of partnership working. There is also evidence of the robust challenge that the Registered Manager and other staff make when the input from other services is not of sufficient quality.

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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