

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	07/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC408714
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Able Health Care Limited
Registered person address	45 Wolsey Road, NORTHWOOD, Middlesex, HA6 2ER

Responsible individual	Aruna Kukadia
Registered manager	Thomas Thurlow
Inspector	Joanna Heller

Inspection date	07/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained 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

SC408714

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is Good because:

- Young people have made progress in relation to their education, health, personal care, behaviour and social skills. They experience increased self-confidence and develop improved emotional resilience.
- The caring staff team provide nurturing, individualised child focused care, which helps young people feel loved, safe and secure. They feel consulted on all aspects of their life.
- Young people are very positive about their experience of living at the home. They establish strong relationships with staff, which they value highly.
- The provision of consistent boundaries within a therapeutic ethos enables staff to successfully effect behavioural change.
- Young people enjoy a wide range of activities and have fun, building positive memories for the future.
- Families and partner professionals have absolute confidence in the staff to keep the vulnerable young people safe. Staff are successful in helping young people rebuild positive relationships with their families.
- Good partnership working and communication with parents, schools and placing social workers enables staff to identify and meet young people's needs.
- Risk management is robust and close partnership working with other agencies promotes positive outcomes.
- This inspection identifies some shortfalls and areas for improvement. These are in relation to improving specific aspects of the environment, recruitment and training. 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 may only employ an individual to work at the children's home if full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. In particular, if a person has previously worked in a position involving work with children, there should be verification so far as reasonably practicable of the reason why the employment or position ended. (Regulation 32 (2)(3)(d), Schedule 2 (4))	08/02/2016

Recommendations

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

Provide a nurturing, supportive, homely and domestic environment that meets the needs of the children. In particular, ensure young people are given appropriate help and support to maintain a reasonable standard of personal accommodation and provide new sofas in the lounge. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 15 paragraph 3.9)

Provide supervision of staff practice which ensures that all individual adults in the home are engaged in the safeguarding culture of the home so they understand what they would need to do if they found other staff misusing or abusing their position to the detriment of the safety of a child. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 43 paragraph 9.14)

Ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. In particular, ensure safeguarding training provided suitably equips all staff to effectively meet the needs of young people. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 53 paragraph 10.11)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home is registered to look after a maximum of six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are education facilities within the grounds of the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
08/05/2014	Full	Good
18/07/2013	Full	Adequate
24/04/2013	Full	Inadequate

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>Staff have a clear ethos of care, providing a therapeutic approach whilst maintaining the routines that are so important to the young people. These emotionally fragile young people, who have sometimes experienced multiple placement breakdowns, flourish within the stable nurturing environment. Equality and diversity is threaded throughout daily practice, ensuring they receive individualised care that helps them to feel safe and secure.</p> <p>Strong nurturing relationships help young people to develop improved emotional resilience, confidence and empathy. Some make great progress in their emotional wellbeing and the attachments between them and staff are fundamental in helping them understand and come to terms with their personal histories. One parent commented that their child says: 'Staff have got a sense of humour, they feel like parents but also mates.'</p> <p>Very well planned admission and transition arrangements mean young people are well prepared and supported when they move in and move on. Any issues within the local area, such as the impact of being in an out of area placement, on their health and well-being are fully explored and appropriate support put in place. The manager ensures that the potential impact of a new placement on the existing group is thoroughly considered. This enables young people to feel more secure and confident in their home. For some young people, this has helped them reconnect with their families, enabling one young person to experience a 'shared care' arrangement as part of planned reunification.</p> <p>The young people are absolutely involved in all day to day decisions about their daily lives and their feedback is actively sought through feedback questionnaires, daily meetings, key work sessions and informal discussions. They are involved in the development of their care plan and risk assessments. As a result, they have an understanding of what staff are trying to achieve and trust them. Furthermore, they have confidence that staff listen to them and will respond to any issues of concern which they may raise. They say: 'I like every one of the staff; they are very nice and caring. They understand your thoughts and feelings and are there when you need them.'</p> <p>Placing authorities and families rate the home as good to excellent. A parent said: 'It feels very much like home from home, staff seem very caring and genuine.'</p>	

Another said: 'Staff are brilliant, funny, daft, but professional.'

Staff provide young people with appropriate support and guidance in maintaining healthy lifestyles. Regular key-work sessions address particular concerns such as, cannabis use and sexual health, providing young people with encouragement and the knowledge to engage in healthier choices. When they are unwell staff 'fuss over them' again instilling the message that they care. Individual preparation for independence mean young people are suitably equipped with practical life skills. They enjoy cooking with staff and some have really good skills. One young person described how they make 'a mean cheesecake', which staff described as 'to die for'.

Young people have had varying success in education; however, all have made progress from their starting point either in attendance or attainment. Schools say that staff 'work very well with complex children'. Staff help older young people to write a curriculum vitae and apply for employment. Staff have been proactive, working closely with schools and promoting the importance of education.

Staff provide a good extracurricular program of enrichment. They enhance young people's understanding of the world through planned activities, such as, cultural themed nights, celebrating different festivals and exploring issues of young people's interests, such as pirates and black history month. Studio 24, a music information technology suite and practical activity room provides a space where, with the support of staff, young people can explore talents, such as, writing lyrics, playing and mixing music and rebuilding an engine. A variety of community based activities, which are responsive to young people's individual interests, such as, local 'fright nights' for Halloween, trampoline centre, camping, speed way and fishing are seen by young people as a particular strength of the home.

All professionals commented on the high level of care and commitment shown to the young people. Placing authorities say that staff are 'unflappable and unfazed' and have 'unbelievable resilience'. They also say that they are 'really impressed with staff' who have 'a good understanding of the children's needs'.

The home is a spacious detached house with large individually decorated bedrooms and generous living space. However, the cleanliness and standard of décor in two bedrooms is poor. Young people are expected to keep their own rooms clean and tidy. Staff do not always provide sufficient supervision to ensure that rooms are maintained to an acceptable minimum level of cleanliness. For example, in one bedroom there were dead insects and cobwebs and in another dirt was trampled all over the floor. Some young people struggle with their emotions and levels of damage are high, however, response to this has been swift and this is not easily noticeable. The young people are encouraged to assist in fixing any damage as a form of reparation, developing a sense of ownership and responsibility. The sofas in the lounge have come to the end of their useful life. Despite these shortfalls, the

accommodation overall provides a homely and welcoming environment for young people.

One young person summed up their thoughts about the home as: 'I wouldn't change anything; the place is perfect in every way.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>The young people feel safe, secure and well cared for. One said: 'I feel very safe; they care and check on me to make sure I'm fine and safe.'</p> <p>They develop strong attachments to staff who they feel they can talk to about any problems they have. Appropriate hugs and high fives are regularly both given and received, providing young people with experience of positive touch and affection within professional guidelines.</p> <p>Staff provide consistently clear boundaries whilst maintaining a calm and relaxed atmosphere. Staff are trained in the use of physical restraint but only use this as a last resort to keep young people safe. A focus on rewarding positive behaviour and enhancing young people's self-awareness and emotional vocabulary has enabled some to self-regulate their behaviour. Staff refer to engaging them in a 'spiral of positivity'. Staff are alert to and respond effectively to any signs of conflict, ensuring that any potential bullying is immediately addressed.</p> <p>Families and partner professionals have absolute confidence in the ability of staff to keep the young people safe. One parent said: 'This home is really good, I feel safe knowing he is safe.'</p> <p>The manager has established positive partnerships with other organisations, such as the police and youth offending teams, to ensure young people are well safeguarded. However, the annual safeguarding training provided to staff is e-learning. Whilst this is a helpful start it limits staff ability to explore wider issues within a group to sufficient depth. For example, not each and every member of staff is fully aware of how to protect and share information in the event of an allegation against a colleague. It is imperative that staff receive good quality, regularly updated safeguarding training, in order to manage risk effectively and robustly protect young people. The impact of this is reduced as the home has good safeguarding procedures in place, which in practice have been effectively implemented in relation to any concerns regarding a young person's welfare.</p>	

Good quality risk assessments and management plans guide staff effectively in how to manage risk and the levels of supervision required to keep young people safe. Staff responses to missing from care are well coordinated, robust and effective, demonstrating a commitment to safeguard and protect in respect of this high-risk area. Staff identify that prevention is key, providing good supervision and planned activity. As a result, there has only been one very short missing from care incident in the past four months.

Staff vetting procedures are generally robust, for example, no staff are employed until checks on their identity and character are verified. However, there is not always robust investigation into any previous childcare employment. This means that there is insufficient scrutiny of applicant’s employment history and information, which could potentially have a bearing on their suitability.

Health and safety arrangements are well managed in the home. The manager has undertaken a thorough review of the suitability of the location in partnership with other agencies. As a result, staff have good insight into particular risks in the area and are mindful of these when considering referrals.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>The home is well led by the enthusiastic and experienced registered manager, who has been in post for one year. The manager has a degree level qualification in therapeutic intervention and is currently studying to obtain a suitable level five qualification in leadership and management of children’s residential care.</p> <p>The home is well resourced and led to meet the services outlined in the statement of purpose. Staffing levels are high and the manager ensures that the needs of the young people remain paramount.</p> <p>Staff enjoy working at the home and young people benefit from their enthusiasm. Staff feel they are well supported by a committed manager who has high expectations, which are communicated through regular good quality supervision and team meetings. Regular ‘secure base’ training and monthly case discussion with a psychologist employed by the home motivates and enthuses staff. As a result, they are successfully implementing the therapeutic ethos within the home.</p> <p>All staff undertake the home’s mandatory programme of training and have either completed or are undertaking suitable level three training in working with children</p>	

and young people. However, some key training, such as, child protection is e-learning, which does not challenge and stimulate staff sufficiently.

The manager is confident and articulate in his communication with partner agencies, building strong partnership working. Together with the positive relationships established with young people and their families, this ensures young people benefit from the best possible all-round support.

Recording systems within the home are efficient and effective. The manager provides good quality notifications of all significant events to the relevant authorities and takes appropriate action following any incident.

Good quality monitoring systems are in place to review young people's emotional well-being and overall progress, as well as the quality of care provided. Systems for gaining feedback are effective, ensuring the manager has a good understanding of the views of young people, their families and other agencies.

The manager has successfully addressed the two requirements from the last inspection. Whilst one requirement and three recommendations have been made at this inspection they do not significantly impact on the positive experiences of young people living at the home. The manager retains good oversight and aspiration for driving improvement.

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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