

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	26/01/2016
Unique reference number	SC462951
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
Inspector	Joanna Heller

Inspection date	26/01/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Declined in 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	Requires improvement

SC462951

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The young people enjoy living at the home and feel well supported and safeguarded. There are a variety of positive role models of both genders with whom they establish strong relationships.
- The individualised support offered by staff has helped young people gain a clearer sense of identity, and improved their confidence and resilience.
- There are very few incidents of young people going missing and their individual personal safety has substantially improved.
- Equality and diversity is threaded through the service. Placing authorities, school and families have absolute confidence that young people's individual needs are well met.
- Levels of antisocial behaviour are low and conflict well managed. This is attributable to the provision of consistent boundaries and significant progress in young people's ability to express their emotions appropriately.
- The staff effectively support young people to develop their independence skills which helps them to develop their confidence and self-esteem.
- Staff are successful in promoting contact and helping young people rebuild positive relationships with their families.
- Close partnership working with other agencies ensures appropriate measures are in place to protect young people.
- This inspection identifies some shortfalls and areas for improvement, such as ensuring only appropriately trained staff administer medication and that clear records of medication are held; recording all complaints; ensuring that staff are fully aware of the safeguarding procedures and are alert to any potential concerns. These shortfalls show quality assurance systems are not sufficiently effective, however, they 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 a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39(3))	28/03/2016

Recommendations

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

- Make suitable arrangements to manage, administer and dispose of any medication. In particular; ensure records of medication are accurate and that staff only administer medication when they have received suitable training, and their competency to so has been assessed (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 35 paragraph 7.15.)
- Managing medicines in care homes (March 2014) is a guideline that applies across both health and social care. In particular; ensure a copy of this guidance is available for reference within the home. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 35 paragraph 7.17)
- Ensure staff are alert to the possibility that children may be at risk from relationships including with other children in the home, staff, family members, friends and others outside the home. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 43 paragraph 9.13)
- The policy for the protection of children from abuse of neglect should be available and explained to children and their families as well as to all staff, whatever their role. The registered person must make sure that all staff are familiar with this policy and act in accordance with it, in particular how to use it to report a concern. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 44 paragraph 9.21)
- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement.

(The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 55 paragraph 10.24)

- Review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. Providers should refer to the non-statutory advice about the location assessment process. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 64 paragraph 15.1)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is one of a small number owned by the organisation. It provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/11/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
14/01/2015	Full	Good
03/09/2014	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
10/10/2013	Full	Good

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>The home is making a positive difference for young people. One young person said: 'It's great, better than any other place I've ever been in.' Staff provide young people with a stable nurturing environment in which professionals say they 'flourish'. As a result of the positive parenting and consistent boundaries they experience, young people have made great progress in a relatively short space of time. Their ability to keep them self safe, behave in a positive manner, engage in education and manage their health needs, have all significantly improved under the guidance of staff.</p> <p>The young people are healthy. The good level of support and information provided by staff and partner agencies has enabled some young people to significantly reduce risky and unhealthy behaviour, such as, drinking and taking drugs. However, despite the guidance given by staff and health agencies, young people continue to smoke. When young people have an accident, are ill or feel anxious they are supported to access appropriate medical support. A psychotherapist has recently been engaged to provide case discussion for staff as well as direct work with young people. Staff have received training in self injurious behaviour which means they are better prepared to effectively meet the needs of young people in crisis or who self harm.</p> <p>Medication arrangements in the home require some improvement in order to comply with the statutory guidance. For example, medication e-learning is not supplemented with an assessment of individual staff's competency to administer medication. Although witnessed by trained staff, untrained staff have on a number of occasions administered medication and records of stock medication are not accurate. There is no suggestion that young people have not received the medication due to them, however, the potential for error is greater where arrangements are not complicit with best practice.</p> <p>The atmosphere within the home is warm and calm, social interaction is friendly and fun within clear boundaries. This provides an environment where young people are helped to understand the needs of others and develop a social conscience.</p> <p>Equality and diversity is threaded through the service. Young people feel very well supported by staff who are responsive to their needs and help them understand their personal histories, and how this affects them. They are fully accepted for who</p>	

they are and are supported to become who they wish to be.

The young people have access to advocates and are confident to raise any concerns with either the manager or independent children's organisations

The knowledge that staff care about them is fundamental in helping young people grow in confidence, self-esteem and resilience. One placing social worker said: 'Staff are very good at helping him with his attachments and have really done well to manage his behaviour. Another professional commented: 'He is well cared for and speaks very fondly of staff.' One young person described how staff sensitively responded to his expression of loss by purchasing flowers and accompanying him to lay them on a grave. He said: 'Carers here are supportive and always have time.'

The manager has since the last inspection improved admission arrangements. Placements are well planned and the potential impact any new placement on existing young people is fully considered.

Staff have been proactive in liaising with schools and promoting the importance of education. One school described how a young person, has made significant progress in education in attendance and engagement, due to the 'excellent' support of staff who have helped him 'improve massively in confidence and self-esteem'. Young people beyond statutory school age are helped to secure appropriate further education or apprenticeship opportunities. Individual well planned preparing for independence arrangements mean young people are suitably equipped with practical life skills.

The young people enjoy daily opportunities for activities with staff, such as, playing monopoly, going to the gym or for a drive. However, like most young people they enjoy meeting up and spending time with their friends either at home or in the community.

The home is in the process of upgrading the accommodation to further enhance the homely and welcoming environment for young people. The open plan lounge and dining room have been divided to provide choice of areas and there are plans to upgrade the kitchen within the next year.

The young people rate the home as good. One summed up their thoughts as 'this home is great'.

	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: 'It's a good home the best I've ever been in, the carers have helped me through a lot'. Staff are alert to and have a clear no tolerance approach to any bullying. As a result there are no issues regarding bullying. The young people say they get on well together and staff report they have developed a friendship.</p> <p>Staff provide consistently clear boundaries whilst maintaining a calm and relaxed atmosphere. They help young people express their feelings in an appropriate way and young people feel listened to. Residents meetings are used to provide an opportunity for everyone to air their views and resolve any conflict whether this is individually or as a group. Through a positive approach to behaviour and sense of humour, staff have created an environment where young people have a sense of belonging, feel valued and want to engage. As a result levels of antisocial behaviour are low. There have been no incidents of restraint in the past year or contact with the police since the last inspection.</p> <p>Partner professionals describe collaborative working and describe young people making strong progress. Comments include: 'He talks about really reflective conversations taking place, they have a really nice approach with how they handle him.' and 'he's moved from very oppositional to now being able to communicate everything effectively'.</p> <p>Effective and regularly reviewed risk assessments and management plans guide staff on how to manage risk. The manager responds to any increased risk appropriately, for example, temporarily implementing waking night staff when a young person indicated a potential intent to self harm.</p> <p>Risk assessments in the majority of instances detail the levels of supervision required to keep young people safe. These are communicated effectively with young people. However, the level of supervision when young people entertain visitors is not specified. As a result the manager and staff do not always share a common understanding what is appropriate.</p> <p>Staff are clear on the individualised missing from care protocols. Missing from care incidents are very rare. If they do occur young people are good at keeping in touch with staff letting them know where they are and that they are safe. This reflects a major change and the significant progress young people have made in managing their personal safety. The individual potential associated risks of missing from, care such as, child sexual exploitation or being a victim or perpetrator of crime have drastically reduced. As a result young people and others are much safer.</p>	

Not all staff are fully aware of how information should be protected and or shared should an allegation against a colleague be made. On one occasion staff have not explored a particular accident to ascertain whether there was a potential safeguarding element.

Robust vetting procedures ensure young people are fully safeguarded from unsuitable people gaining employment within the home.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
<p>The home is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced registered manager. Having managed the home since registration they have provided continuity of leadership. The manager has worked enthusiastically to successfully address the six requirements from the last inspection. However, six recommendations and one requirement have been set at this inspection. They have not therefore successfully implemented effective internal monitoring and independent scrutiny of the home to ensure continuous improvement.</p> <p>Staffing levels are appropriate to meet the individually assessed needs of each young person. The manager ensures that staff remain awake until young people are settled at night. Staff deliver child focussed individualised care and the young people benefit from a home where they are continually consulted. There is on occasion, insufficient communication to ensure that supervision arrangements for visitors are effectively shared. This left the manager unaware of arrangements which do not meet his expectations.</p> <p>Staff feel well supported through regular team meetings and effective supervision arrangements.</p> <p>A small number of staff have yet to complete the homes mandatory programme of training. However, clear plans are in place for this to occur. Since the last inspection staff have all undertaken training in self-injurious behaviour. This equips staff to effectively meet the needs of young people. A significant proportion of the 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. Additionally it does not effectively allow the manager to fully understand staff knowledge and competence particularly in areas, such as, medication and safeguarding.</p>	

Partner professionals refer to 'excellent partnership' arrangements which ensure that they and parents are kept up to date on all aspects of care and that young people's needs are met.

The home is suitably resourced to ensure that the service meets the aims and objectives as set out in the statement of purpose.

One complaint has been received since the last inspection. The manager responded appropriately, investigating and informing the complainant of the outcome. However, a record of the complaint was not maintained in the home's central record of complaints.

The manager has undertaken a review as to the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home which identifies low risks in relation to criminal activity within the community. However, there is insufficient information and evaluation of any risks and opportunities regarding health and education presented by the home's location, and strategies for managing these.

Whilst some shortfalls have been made at this inspection these do not significantly impact on the overwhelmingly positive experiences of the young people. The manager whilst not fully knowledgeable about the strengths and areas for growth within the home is committed to providing good quality residential child care. They quickly identified strategies for improvement retaining their aspiration and enthusiasm 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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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
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