

Children's homes inspection -- Full

Inspection date	5 May 2016
Unique reference number	1213828
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Christopher Pennington
Inspector	Mandy Williams

Inspection date	5 May 2016
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

1213828

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people enjoy positive and respectful relationships with staff.
- Young people are learning how to keep themselves safe.
- Young people attend school regularly and are making educational progress.
- Young people are learning to manage their own behaviour.
- Staff work in partnership with local authorities and young people's families. Their communication is good.
- Young people are able to access a range of activities, both inside and outside the home.
- Staff support young people to maintain contact with their family and friends.
- The management of young people's health needs is good.
- Young people appreciate the warm, family environment in which they reside.
- Staffing ratios are good, enabling staff to spend individual time with young people.

Areas for improvement include: staff recruitment and vetting processes; forwarding of updated documents to Ofsted; staff training; and the support and supervision of staff while on probation.

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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
Ensure that HMCI is notified of any revisions to the statement of purpose and is sent a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision (Regulation 16 (3)(b)).	3 June 2016
Ensure that staff recruitment procedures are designed to ensure children's safety; specifically that the principles of safer recruitment are followed and that records demonstrate where discrepancies in reference checks have been explored (Regulation 32 (1)(3)(d)).	3 June 2016

Recommendations

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

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care.

Specifically, that staff on probation receive this frequently enough to promote their development ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2).

- Ensure that staff have access to the appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs.

Specifically, that they attend training in autism awareness ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 10.11).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is one of a number of homes operated by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children and young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities.

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>Living in the home has a positive impact on the progress and life experience of the young people who live here. They benefit from consistent care, as the staff team working in the home is largely stable. This helps young people to feel safe and secure, as they are confident in the standard of care that they can expect to receive. Warm and respectful relationships are evident between staff and young people. They enjoy the time that they spend together. Young people benefit from good routines and clear, consistent boundaries. As a result, their disruptive behaviours decrease and improvements are soon evident across all areas of their development. One social worker commented, 'X is provided with a nurturing home environment. Staff are meeting all of X's needs. I am really pleased with the progress that has been made since placement.'</p> <p>Young people are welcomed into the home and their move is carefully planned to alleviate the disruption. Staff visit the young person initially, who then has the opportunity to visit the home before moving in. Family members are included in this process, if appropriate. Similarly, staff prepare those living in the home for the arrival of a new resident. Staff help young people to settle in by explaining the routines in the home and by getting to know them. Young people are also able to personalise their bedroom and make this space their own. This reduces young people's anxiety, and the placement begins on a positive note.</p> <p>Staff have a good understanding of the backgrounds and needs of young people. They are cared for in accordance with their personalised placement plans. Young people have specific incentive plans, ensuring that there is a focus on addressing</p>	

specific areas of need. Staff complete monthly update reports that outline the progress that young people are making. Social workers find these particularly helpful.

Staff ensure that young people are able to keep in contact with their family and friends. Staff will facilitate contact and they work proactively with parents and in the best interest of the young person. Similarly, staff promote young people's friendships. One young person said, 'My friend was allowed to come for a sleepover, which was fun.' This helps to ensure that young people do not feel different among their peer group.

Young people's attendance at school and their educational progress are improving. Although young people do struggle to manage their behaviours in the school setting, staff work well with education staff to provide support. Staff use a home-to-school diary to help with the transfer of information. They also ensure that young people have a quiet place to complete their homework.

Staff register young people with appropriate health services on their admission. The young people each have a healthcare plan containing the specifics of their care. Staff are successfully managing complex health needs. They liaise closely with healthcare professionals and family members in order to ensure the health and well-being of each young person.

Young people have access to a range of leisure activities. Good staffing levels enable young people to engage in activities of particular interest to them. They engage in activities with staff, but also partake in social clubs in the community. For example, young people attend a youth club and army cadets, and go horse riding. Young people learn socially acceptable behaviours in these settings. They play a significant role in improving their confidence and self-esteem. Social workers comment specifically on the improvements in young people's presentation and self-esteem.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people say that they feel safe here. They believe that staff do their best to keep them safe. They have details about agencies that they can contact for support, if they need to, and on their admission to the home they receive	

information about how to make a complaint. Only one complaint has been received since the home opened. The young people spoken to said that they had confidence in staff and feel that they take seriously any problems that the young people raise.

The rules of the home are clear, and young people understand about standards of acceptable behaviour. There is a calm and homely atmosphere in the home. All staff receive training in behaviour management, including the safe use of restraint. However, the small size of the home allows staff to respond to the individual needs of the young people. They help them to develop their own coping mechanisms. Consequently, restraints are rarely required. One young person commented, 'I used to be restrained a lot in the last home I lived in, but I haven't been restrained at all, here.' The ethos of the home is to reward good behaviour, and young people respond well to their individualised incentive programmes.

There has been a reduction in young people's risk-taking behaviours since their admission to the home. For example, there has only been one incident of a young person going missing from the home. Staff search the local area and work effectively with the police to ensure the young person's safe return. Staff target the individual work that they complete with young people on such behaviours of concern. The reduction in incidents indicates that this is effective in increasing the young people's awareness of the risks that they place themselves in.

Staff are vigilant to the risks of social networking and the Internet. However, young people do have access to these media if their risk assessments support this. Staff work with young people to alert them to the potential risks, and also about how to keep themselves safe. Clear contracts of usage are agreed. If young people fail to meet the terms of their contract, then action is taken. For example, inappropriate content on social networking sites results in an initial time-limited withdrawal of usage of the device, leading to longer-term withdrawal for a subsequent concern. Young people say that such sanctions are fair, as they knew what they have agreed to do. However, staff continue to educate young people about safe usage and review their decision on a regular basis.

Staff recruitment processes are not sufficiently robust. Applicants are asked to provide explanations regarding any gaps in their employment history, and references are obtained and verified. However, when dates of employment given by an applicant and those given by referees are not consistent, managers have not identified the additional gaps in the applicant's career history. Hence, the current level of scrutiny provides insufficient safeguard against unsuitable individuals gaining employment at the home.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>The registered manager has been in post since the home was registered in November 2015. Consequently, this is the home’s first inspection. The manager has the necessary skills, qualifications and experience to manage the home. He also has management responsibility for a further two homes in the organisation. A deputy manager works in this home to support him. They both know the young people well and utilise the strengths of the staff team to good effect. The majority of the staff have a level 3 qualification, and the remainder are working towards this.</p> <p>The home’s statement of purpose reflects the aims and objectives of the home. However, despite these being updated on more than one occasion since registration, copies have not been sent to Ofsted in a timely way, as required. This was rectified during the inspection. The internal and external monitoring of the home takes place as required and helps to identify shortfalls in practice. The registered manager also has a development plan for the home. Issues identified include improving the garden and utilising the garage space to better effect. Staff and young people contribute to these objectives.</p> <p>Liaison with other agencies is effective. Social workers speak positively about staff communication. One social worker commented, ‘The staff contact me regarding significant events and they provide a monthly chronology and report.’ Social workers appreciate this updated information and this helps to ensure that all those involved with young people are aware of the current situation. Young people’s case records are of a good quality. They reflect the care plans for each young person, and good-quality reports outline the progress that they are making.</p> <p>The majority of staff receive supervision on a regular basis and in accordance with the organisation’s policy. However, staff in their probationary period and new to residential work have not been receiving additional supervisory support. They have not had the benefit of additional support to assist them to reflect on their practice or to develop their skills. Similarly, while the organisation provides staff with a number of training opportunities, this is not always targeted to meet the specific needs of the young people in the home. For example, there has been no training provided in understanding autism, despite this being an issue for one young person who has lived in the home since it opened.</p>	

The home is warm and welcoming. Staff and young people appreciate their environment. Young people have ample space to engage in communal activities, but also opportunities for privacy. The home is located in a pleasant residential area and it is indistinguishable from other residential properties.

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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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