

## **Children's homes inspection – Full**

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>11 May 2016</b>
<b>Unique reference number</b>	<b>1183494</b>
<b>Type of inspection</b>	<b>Full</b>
<b>Provision subtype</b>	<b>Children's home</b>
<b>Registered manager</b>	<b>Denise Ansah</b>
<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Chris Peel</b>

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>11 May 2016</b>
<b>Previous inspection judgement</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>This inspection</b>	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	<b>Good</b>
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>

**1183494**

## **Summary of findings**

### **The children's home provision is good because:**

- Young people report good relationships with staff, leading to some being able to 'open up' about issues that are important to them. Where this is the case, risky behaviour, including drug taking and going missing, has reduced.
- Staff have a high degree of confidence in the manager and in each other, giving them the reassurance to remain patient and resilient when faced with challenging behaviour and insulting language. It also gives them the capacity to work to rebuild relationships.
- The home has strong links with other professionals including the local safeguarding children board, the youth service, the police and voluntary organisations. These are used to good effect to increase the opportunities for young people to overcome previous experiences, widen the range of activities available to them and to manage, and sometimes reduce, risks.
- Education is supported well through relationships with schools, colleges and the head of the virtual school of the local authority. Young people see attendance as a high priority for the manager and staff, even if they are reluctant to go themselves. Funding has been made available to improve educational facilities in the home, that young people are helping to decide how to spend, increasing their commitment to educational attainment.
- Professionals comment favourably on the welcome they are given, combined with staff ensuring that there are proper procedures to ensure the safety and security of children and young people.
- As one professional put it, 'Although not a specialist placement (for a troubled young person) staff have done some good work on presenting issues and needs. Befriending has worked well.' He added 'there has been 100% support for her health needs.'

## 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 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 must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that restraint in relation to a child (including preventing them leaving the premises) is only permitted for the purpose of preventing injury to any person (including the child), serious damage to the property of any person (including the child) and must be necessary and proportionate. Risk assessments and records of incidents should demonstrate that this is the case. (Regulation 20 (1) and (2))	17 June 2016
The registered person must ensure that a record is made within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint, within 48 hours that the user has been spoken to about the measure and signed the record to confirm that it is accurate, and that within five days an addition is made to the record that the child has been spoken to about the measure. In particular, records must show that these timescales have been adhered to. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(b)(c))	17 June 2016

### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- The home should take the initiative in identifying others who must play a part in the lives of their children and engage with those relevant people proactively, including the prompt sharing of relevant information. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 2.7, page 12)
- Staff should seek to meet the child's basic needs in the way that a good parent would, recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where these needs have not been consistently met. Doing so is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care for the child and value them as an individual. This relates to consistently providing attention to and following through keeping safe strategies with young people ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 3.7, Page 15)
- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the

needs of their children, they will be homely, domestic environments. This is in particular respect to improving the appearance of the kitchen and garden and rectifying the ventilation in the unpleasant-smelling shower. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 3.9, page 15)

- Any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home and any modifications to the environment of the home, must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 3.10, page 15)
- Children should be provided with appropriate furniture, such as a lockable cabinet or drawers, to store personal items securely, including any personal information. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 3.19, page 16)
- The registered person should undertake a review that focuses on the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact that the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. Reviews should be underpinned by the Quality Standards. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 15.2, page 64)

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven children and young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. These may be aged between seven and 11 years on admission. It is a purpose-built local authority children's home that opened in 2005 but transferred to a trust established in October 2015.

The previous Unique Reference Number was SC065486

### Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
9 November 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

## Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	<b>Good</b>
<p>Young people report positive relationships with staff and that they enjoy activities with them, from 'having a chat' to 'bigger stuff in the holidays, like go-karting.' A co-key working system means that there is someone well acquainted with a young person's circumstances for them to speak to on most shifts. One young person said 'I get to talk about issues I want to,' adding, 'staff follow through and do what they say.' Key worker session records do not identify agenda items that young people bring to them but staff are responsive to issues important to them. One commented that, 'You raise issues you know they will probably want to talk about.' Most often this will be at an opportune time rather than at a formal meeting, but it is recorded on the same format and with the same detail, including actions to be taken.</p> <p>Staff work hard at maintaining positive relationships, showing patience and resilience even when behaviour is problematic. One of the team commented, 'What we have here is good relationships with young people and that means that incidents reduce and we keep them here by the strength of our relationships.' A professional noted that, 'Befriending has worked with my young person. She knows staff are accessible. Assistance is needed, which she now recognises.'</p> <p>There is a belief among the team that often the influence of peers or of family members 'will have a greater impact than staff will ever do,' and that a 'bigger group of young people leads to greater difficulties in the job.' The 'strength of the relationship' at these times is much less effective. Although staff encourage young people to make better choices, their role becomes more one of containment. There have been occasions when the staff have not been able to achieve this on their own and the police have had to be called to prevent excessive damage to the home or to deal with threats of violence.</p> <p>A professional commented that 'the location of the unit is not the most helpful to young people.' Staff are aware of this and, for example, do offer to go with young people, or wait at bus stops with them. However, during the inspection staff had particular concerns about the safety of a young person wanting to go out and suggested that she should be accompanied. An argument ensued about trust and the young person went on her own, when escorting her would have given a strong message about staff wanting to keep her safe even when she was not making</p>	

good decisions.

Staff have supported a young person with complex health needs, requiring invasive surgery and frequent hospital visits. Although parents have been critical of the young person's care, the manager has responded by facilitating a complaint, and professionals do not share the concerns. Lengthy visits were made by staff every day that she was in hospital, without which she would have had few, if any, visitors. Staff have also worked well to maintain her involvement in education while off school for an extended period of time, including effective liaison with the virtual head for children looked after.

The home is proactive in helping children and young people to achieve in education, with a tutor coming in to run a weekly homework club and daily contact with providers when there are issues over attendance. One young person said, 'Staff are always talking about education. They get us up in the morning and don't leave us alone until we are up and ready to go.' Currently young people are involved in making decisions with the manager about how to spend money allocated to improving resources for education, including new computers and books. Contracts are made with young people that link rewards with attendance and behaviour. 'Stepping forward' plans make it clear what young people need to do to achieve their aspirations, whether in terms of careers or future living arrangements. Although not successful in achieving consistent progress, when young people have engaged they make improvements.

Contact with family members has been facilitated well, with visits being made by them to the home when possible. One young person was particularly appreciative of being able to go for a day out with a brother. Without staff arranging and supervising the trip, a valuable relationship-building experience would have been missed.

The home has a welcoming atmosphere and is clean and tidy but a shower room has a ventilation problem leading to unpleasant smells, kitchen units have suffered damage and the garden is unkempt. These detract from the homely nature of the accommodation and the experiences of young people living here.

Young people's rooms are adequately furnished but do not have a lockable drawer or cabinet to keep valuable personal possessions in. A cash box is provided, but it is too small for documents to be kept in and keys have been lost.



	Judgement grade
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Good</b>
<p>Some staff vacancies are being carried that are not having a significant impact on young people, but necessitate staff undertaking overtime and managers taking an occasional shift. Agency staff have been used in the past, but they are well known to young people as some have previously been employed at the home.</p> <p>The staff do well when there are fewer children and young people in the home, with evidence of considerable progress. For example a young person at risk of child sexual exploitation, who may have had to be moved out of the borough to be kept safe, is now thought to be suitable for a foster placement. She commented, 'I was getting into trouble a lot, but staff made me see things differently. I've decided not to do things that were getting me into trouble.'</p> <p>However, there is a pattern of staff struggling to help children and young people progress when numbers increase. Staff, along with other agencies, have been unable to prevent young people from getting involved in gang-related activity, persistently absconding or from involvement with drugs and other criminal activity.</p> <p>Some staff members are better at engaging with young people than others. A comment was made by a professional that on occasions those on duty have been seen sitting in the office while young people wandered aimlessly around. One young person referred to being bored, and this led to arguments between residents, but also said, 'All the staff have time for us'.</p> <p>The home has improved monitoring processes. There is a regular and thorough health and safety schedule and very few gaps were found in records, contributing to a safe environment for young people. An issue with transferring contacts did lead to a fault with the fire board not being repaired for three weeks, which is a long time to be without a fully functioning system, but it is now operational.</p> <p>Although there have been several incidents of threatening behaviour, and even assaults, young people say that there is no bullying in the home. Staff do address these issues in key worker sessions, both with victims and perpetrators, with the aim of ensuring that such incidents are not regarded as normal or acceptable.</p> <p>Young people report that when they have gone missing staff have gone out looking for them, and welcomed them when they return. Return to care interviews are now regularly completed. Episodes of missing were high when more children and young people were placed in the home, but have stabilised for one current</p>	

resident and reduced for the other.

The numbers of sanctions and physical interventions are also low.

	Judgement grade
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<p>The manager enjoys the backing of a team who believe she has made a significant contribution to the effective running of the home and say that she is available and supportive. This is despite being employed through an agency and not working full time. The manager has been in post for over a year and holds an NVQ 4 in leadership and management for residential social care.</p> <p>Supervision, whether provided by the manager or a deputy, is regular and addresses the needs of staff. This sets the tone for a group that has considerable experience of working with children and young people, who enjoy their work and are supportive of each other.</p> <p>Very good networks have been forged with the local safeguarding children board, with the manager sitting on a sub-committee that addresses issues of missing children, child sexual exploitation and gang behaviour. These links are used to gather local information and to alert others, such as the police community support officer, to specific concerns.</p> <p>Professionals are welcomed into the home to work with young people, and this widens the scope of support available to residents and improves the experience of living in the home. These workers report that staff are 'exceptionally friendly' and accommodating, but were divided on how well the home communicates with them. The manager was regarded as being good in this regard, but her example is not consistently followed by the team, as emails are not always replied to and important information is often only given to professionals when they come on site.</p> <p>Case files are in very good order, helped by a thorough audit process. Young people had requested to see their files and recently signed them to say that they had been read. Plans and assessments are 'living documents', regularly updated and closely linked to statutory reviews. Some actions set for staff and young people were too vague to be clear as to what was expected, such as 'staff to actively encourage "X" to make good choices in relation to education,' and few had a useful timescale.</p>	

Logs kept to monitor physical interventions and sanctions did not contain sufficient information to be clear about what had taken place, particularly antecedents, and did not demonstrate that regulatory timescales, for the manager to speak to those involved, were kept. Some entries were difficult to read, with additional notes being squeezed in or corrections made by overwriting. In addition, the home's complaints log was not always clear about the nature of a grievance.

The manager has introduced a log to record occasions when front or internal doors have been locked. This is commendable, but entries do not always demonstrate that the measure has been taken to prevent an immediate risk of harm, such as young people 'hanging around front door, in and out without permission.' In some circumstances, staff need to make swift decisions to safeguard young people, and the specific assessments and necessary understanding of professional practice are not in place to ensure that they are equipped to ensure that these are proportionate.

A development plan is in place but most timescales for actions have not been met, largely because the trust that has taken over responsibility for the home is still addressing wider structural issues that need to be in place first. This has also had an impact on how swiftly maintenance issues have been addressed. The home has the elements of a workforce plan in place, and the manager has begun to join these plans together into an overarching document.

The review of the home's quality of care does not specifically address the quality standards, but actions identified by the manager have been followed up and have resulted in improvements.

## 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 children looked after 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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