

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	19 July 2016
Unique reference number	1223501
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Hexagon Care Services Limited
Registered provider address	1 Tustin Court, Riversway, Preston, PR2 2YQ

Responsible individual	Jeanette Swift
Registered manager	Beverley Haydock
Inspector	Elaine Clare

Inspection date	19 July 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	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

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Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people make outstanding progress in all aspects of their lives. The strength and quality of relationships between them and staff ensure that they are able to address and reduce their high-risk behaviours.
- The home is determined not to give up on young people. The commitment of staff to meeting young people's complex, and occasional vulnerabilities ensures that young people know they are cared for and valued.
- The promotion of learning enables young people to make significant progress. This results in consistently high levels of attendance at school and vast improvements in levels of engagement and achievement.
- Young people have their emotional well-being met to the highest standards. An excellent approach to engaging partner agencies results in shared goals where young people receive specialist help and intervention when they need it.
- This is a home that aspires to wanting the very best for young people. The experienced and conscientious management team has high expectations of care and practice. The management team encourages and supports staff to provide young people with highly individualised levels of guidance and support. As a result, the needs of young people always come first.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a children's home operated by a private company. It is currently registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four males. The home cares for young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. This is the home's first inspection, since moving premises.

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
<p>Young people benefit hugely from strong and positive relationships with staff that enable them to engage with the care provided. As a result, they are able to get through difficult periods, settle back down and make significant progress. The commitment of staff to continually provide high standards of care and support for young people, irrespective of their behaviours and complex needs, is the backbone of practice. For instance, young people who had to have brief periods of time away from the home, such as due to a custodial sentence, have returned, settled quickly, used the strength of existing relationships and made considerable progress. This is most important for those who had engaged in self-harming behaviours. One young person said, 'this is the longest placement I have had... I know staff care... this is my home'.</p> <p>Care professionals praise the home, the efforts of staff and the progress made by young people. One social worker stated that, '(name of young person) has settled much more than expected, has developed strong bonds with staff and has made incredible progress since living at the home'.</p> <p>Young people live in a home that provides them with a high standard of accommodation and facilities. It offers a large amount of space inside and outside, and is set in a small rural town. Young people decorate their rooms with posters and personal belongings which provide a homely feel. The addition of activity equipment has enhanced the indoor area and provided increased opportunities for young people to lead healthy lives.</p> <p>Young people have a clear voice in the home. Regular meetings take place, where their requests are taken seriously and acted upon. For instance, young people help choose the menu, were central to the holiday planning in Spain and requested the newly acquired equipment. The atmosphere is open and young people are clearly confident to express their views and opinions in the presence of staff and managers. One social worker commented, 'All key workers for (X) and managers have an excellent understanding of how to support (X) complex needs and advocate passionately on his behalf.' This means that young people are included in decision-making and made to feel part of the home.</p> <p>A thorough admission procedure ensures that due consideration is given to the complexities of each young person and the dynamics of the current group of young people. This enables a clear emphasis on matching prospective new young people with the needs of the whole group. This is particularly important given the level of</p>	

complex emotional needs that many of the young people have. As a result, the atmosphere of the home is lively but settled with young people mixing well and respecting each other.

Excellent programmes of care ensure that the needs of young people are met holistically. Individual needs are assessed in depth and involve young people, and those important to them, in their development. Each young person's identity is valued and any specific needs form the basis of care and intervention. Care plans provide staff with clear guidance as to how to meet the needs of young people, and these are followed in practice. The plans include cohesive strategies to work alongside partner agencies in providing joined-up care; for example, in dovetailing the need to meet emotional well-being through a focus on key-working in the home with regular counselling with drug addiction professionals in the community and the home. This ensures that young people receive consistent care and support and expert help when they need it.

A comprehensive assessment process is in place to review the needs of young people against their initial care plan. Such reviews allow for a detailed consideration of all aspects of individual need. These consultations take place regularly and include the involvement of the whole staff team and participation from professionals in the community. This enables all contributors of the care plan to review its effectiveness and subsequent progress.

Young people receive individualised healthcare, with an excellent emphasis on meeting their emotional and psychological well-being. Close working with the local looked after children's nurse ensures that young people receive regular advice and guidance, such as on smoking in the privacy of their own home. Young people are helped to attend routine medical appointments and to lead a healthy lifestyle. This includes staff using their enthusiasm to take the young people swimming and to the gym.

Education is highly valued and promoted in the home. There is an established culture that young people attend and engage in their learning. Most young people are currently attending alternative community-based provision, with one young person attending a mainstream high school. Attendance levels are consistently high. Where necessary, local authorities are challenged to ensure that education plans are forthcoming. This is especially important given the starting point of many young people when they move in. For some, their progress in education has been outstanding given that they arrived with histories of poor attendance and engagement. Young people have progressed to sit exams when previously they had not attended school for long periods of time. Young people are looking forward to receiving their results in the summer and moving on to college placements in September.

Young people enjoy nutritious meals with a healthy diet promoted. The home caters for individual dietary needs and preferences. Young people say that the food

is 'very good'. Weekly meetings take place with young people to plan forthcoming menus and consider different meal options. Meal times are an important part of the daily routines of the home and one where young people and staff come together as a group. The homely mood comes out in these informal yet respectful occasions where the relaxed atmosphere enables open discussion and debate to take place easily.

Young people receive excellent support and encouragement to enjoy activities and pursue their interests. The routines of the home are set to provide structure, but at the same time are flexible and responsive to each young person's individual needs. Young people can choose to participate in sport such as golf and they visit scooter parks. They are also encouraged to join local clubs and participate in their community; for instance, by regularly attending football and youth clubs. Some young people have previously taken up horse riding and benefited massively from the therapeutic impact this had on them. This has not only provided them with a new and exciting pastime, but has invigorated and encouraged them to use their free time constructively alongside engaging in an activity that has greatly developed their confidence and self-esteem.

Contact with families, friends and those people important to young people are promoted within the parameters of placement agreements. One social worker said, 'They have well established relationships with family, promoting safety through contact and reports/updates are to a high standard and greatly appreciated by the LA.' Young people have easy access to phones, with most having their own. Staff are very supportive of such arrangements and social workers comment positively about the manner in which visits are facilitated and the caring nature of staff.

Young people are given considerable support and guidance as part of learning independence skills. Care planning takes account of the longer term needs of young people and, in particular, pathway plans. The management and staff are proactive at challenging placing authorities who do not have such plans in place, with a clear focus on the need to equip young people for their lives once they leave the home. Older young people work through bespoke programmes of gaining and improving life care skills. This includes living on a budget, shopping and cooking their own meals and one-to-one sessions with staff which focus on considering the realities of life after leaving residential care. Such an approach assists in alleviating anxieties and enhances the chances of successful transitions.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
Young people are safe living in the home and receive intensive support to reduce	

their risk-taking behaviours. They say that they feel safe and there are no reported episodes of bullying. Excellent levels of staff supervision further reduce the risk of incidents occurring unnoticed. The positive relationships shared between staff and young people enable them to feel safe enough to discuss their fears and concerns. This has helped young people to come to terms with their own vulnerabilities and become safer as a result.

Good links with the local safeguarding children's board (LSCB) ensure that all child protection policies and procedures are consistent and agreed. The manager maintains appropriate links with the LSCB and the designated officer. This ensures that swift actions are taken in line with local and national protocols.

Young people receive excellent support and intervention to address their concerning and risky behaviours. This is particularly relevant for those who are vulnerable to exploitation. This has meant a significant reduction in risk-taking behaviours for young people who had previously placed themselves at risk.

The home has been successful in considerably reducing the occasions when young people leave the home without permission. Protocols developed with local police aim to protect young people from their own risk-taking behaviours and from exploitation by others. This includes staff actively looking for young people when they are missing from home and liaising effectively with partner agencies to ensure their safe return. When necessary, staff intervene swiftly to stop young people from placing themselves at a physical risk of harm. Individual risk assessments provide a balance between acknowledging risk, incorporating agreed safety plans and supporting young people to engage in the community. This allows them to develop self-protection strategies as well as social and life skills.

Young people live in a home where the expectations of behaviour are appropriately high. They say that they understand the rules and comment that they are 'fair'. Staff are skilled at utilising their relationships with young people to help them to improve their behaviour. Each young person has a set of individualised aims and objectives to meet, such as reducing swearing, being friendly with each other and keeping their room tidy. The continual focus on positive reinforcement reduces the need to use punitive sanctions. Behaviour during the inspection was excellent, with young people treating staff and each other with respect and understanding.

The health and safety of young people is taken seriously. Regular fire drills ensure that young people know how to evacuate the building safely. Routine checks and tests of equipment and the living environment mean that the home is safe to live in.

	Judgement grade
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The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
<p>The management of the home is outstanding. The registered manager and her team show a relentless commitment to meeting the specific needs of young people with the highest standards. She is suitably qualified and experienced and holds the required level 4 award in leadership and management. The registered manager and her deputy work tirelessly in promoting the individual needs of young people and expect appropriately high levels of practice from the staff team and other professionals. This culminates in a culture where young people come first.</p> <p>Social workers confirmed that the home is run in a way that places the individual needs of young people as the paramount concern. This was particularly notable in staff remaining committed to young people who initially struggled to settle and who presented with highly challenging behaviours. Other care professionals noted the high levels of communication and integrity and unstinting focus on working together for the benefit of young people.</p> <p>A suitable complaints process is in place, which is followed in practice. No complaints have been made with the registered manager. Young people know how to complain should they wish. The atmosphere is open and young people clearly have a voice in the home.</p> <p>Good levels of inter-agency working are in place to ensure that young people are provided with the services that they require. For example, the registered manager has appropriately challenged partner agencies to put in place strategies and pathway plans at the earliest possible opportunity. One social care professional said, 'The home staff are child focused and follow up well on care issues, challenging where needed.'</p> <p>Excellent monitoring processes are in place that routinely assess, review and evaluate the quality of care. The registered manager completes regular reviews of care that are objective and reflect the progress of young people. Her reports are far reaching and use data to evaluate the particular progress of each young person. The findings of monitoring reports inform the home's development plan and highlight the importance of seeking the most up-to-date ways of meeting the complex needs of young people in residential care. Independent monitoring occurs monthly and this provides an in-depth critique of the home and the quality of the care provision.</p> <p>Good numbers of staff are available to care for young people. Generally, staffing is stable with very few staff choosing to move on. One social worker commented, 'the staff are very committed to the young people and know them well and their approach is nurturing which you don't always find in a residential setting. Certain members of staff have earned (X) trust and he is able to speak to them about his worries and concerns.' New casual staff have been employed and undertake a</p>	

suitable induction programme that allows them to shadow more experienced colleagues. Good levels of routine training are provided, with a majority of staff holding a relevant qualification in care; the few that do not are currently working towards obtaining one.

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 that 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 that 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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