

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	12/07/16
Unique reference number	SC430320
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	The Vine Residential Services (TVRS) Ltd
Registered provider address	Studio 4, 1st Floor, The Granary, 80 Abbey Road, Barking, Essex IG11 7BT

Responsible individual	Audrey Joseph
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Seka Graovac

Inspection date	12/07/16
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Requires improvement
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC430320

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- The home has not had a registered manager for over seven months. This has negatively affected the quality of the service.
- The provider does not demonstrate consistent compliance with legislation and good practice. The inconsistencies have created risks to the young people's welfare and the quality of their experiences.
- The recruitment of staff is inconsistent. This weakness exposes young people to the risk of being cared for by individuals who might not be suitable for their role.
- A lack of regular formal staff supervision and weakened management scrutiny have contributed to the inconsistencies in some aspects of practice.
- The restrictions to young people's access to certain areas of the home are not reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to be essential for the protection of their welfare.
- The locking of one fire exit, without proper safeguarding arrangements, compromised fire safety.
- The inefficient record-keeping, in particular in relation to the log of physical interventions, has undermined the quantitative analysis and monitoring for patterns and trends.
- Some of the records are generic, rather than being relevant to the needs of the individual young people.
- The home's written child protection and safeguarding procedure does not cover arrangements for countering risks of suicide and self-harm.
- The home's policy on physical contact between staff and young people is unclear for some staff.

The children's home strengths

- Staff are highly skilled at building close, positive and trusting relationships with young people.
- Staff effectively promote an increased sense of stability in young people's lives.
- The home's approach to the behaviour of young people and risk management practice is proactive, collaborative and dynamic. Staff are effective at helping young people to develop more constructive and safer behaviours.
- Staff effectively promote young people's sense of order, calm and belonging.
- Young people attend their schools regularly and achieve good outcomes in their learning.
- Staff help young people to lead healthy lifestyles.
- Staff advocate on the young people's behalf.
- Staff empower young people to have a voice. They effectively promote the young people's positive choices and engagement.
- Young people access a wide range of recreational, creative and fun activities.
- The physical environment is comfortably furnished and very well maintained.
- Admissions to the home and transitions to adult services are managed well.
- The home works in an effective partnership with families, placing authorities and education and health professionals to support and promote young people's progress. The provider has built a good reputation. The provision is highly valued.
- Staff have good opportunities for training and professional development.
- The responsible individual has a clear vision for the development of the service. A comprehensive improvement plan is in place that guides practice and informs future developments.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
13 The leadership and management standard (2) In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must establish efficient systems for record-keeping that effectively support monitoring and review processes. This in particular relates to the records of physical interventions and is in particular reference to the part of the quality standard that says that the registered persons (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	01/11/16
21 Privacy and access The registered person must ensure that— (a) the privacy of children is appropriately protected; (b) children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and (c) any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— (i) is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; (ii) is necessary and proportionate; (iii) is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and (iv) allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe.	01/11/16
25 Fire precautions (1) After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must — (b) provide adequate means of escape from the home in the event of fire. (Regulation 25(1)(b))	01/11/16
27 Appointment of manager	01/11/16

<p>(1) The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if—</p> <p>(a) there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and</p> <p>(b) the registered provider—</p> <p>(i) is an organisation or a partnership;</p> <p>(ii) does not satisfy regulation 28; or</p> <p>(iii) is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home.</p> <p>(2) If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of—</p> <p>(a) the name of the person so appointed; and</p> <p>(b) the date on which the appointment takes effect.</p> <p>(Regulation 27(1)(2))</p>	
<p>32 Fitness of workers</p> <p>(1) The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>(2) The registered person may only—</p> <p>(a) employ an individual to work at the children's home; or</p> <p>(b) if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>(3) The requirements are that—</p> <p>(a) the individual is of integrity and good character;</p> <p>(d) full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2.</p> <p>(Regulation 32(1)(2)(3)(a)(d))</p>	01/11/16
<p>33 Employment of staff</p> <p>(4) The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>(b) receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience.</p> <p>(Regulation 33(4)(b))</p>	01/11/16

Recommendations

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

- Improve the quality of young people's daily reports so that they more clearly link with the young people's care plans and individual needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.1)
- Enhance the safeguarding culture in the home by raising the profile of the home's policy on safe practice regarding physical contact. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.8)
- Update the child protection and safeguarding policy to include arrangements for countering risks of self-harm, suicide and radicalisation. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.19)

Full report

Information about this children's home

A private company operates this home for young people who have a diagnosed autistic spectrum disorder and/or have learning difficulties. The home is registered for two short-break and three long-term placements. The short-break aspect of the service generally operates between Friday and Monday and in school holidays. The company also has a day service provision/activity centre at a nearby site.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
17/09/2015	Full	Good
17/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
07/01/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Requires improvement
<p>Weaknesses in the home's management, coupled with some shortfalls in safeguarding, means the overall experiences and progress of young people is judged as requiring improvement.</p> <p>The lack of a registered manager has affected the quality of the service in a number of aspects. The shortfalls have led to the potential risks to young people's welfare and the quality of their experiences.</p> <p>Many aspects of care are good. Staff effectively promote improved outcomes for young people. They understand young people very well. They are able to support young people's progress and development effectively. They are highly skilled at building close relationships with young people. This includes the young people who have an autistic spectrum disorder at a severe level and find relationships very difficult.</p> <p>Through providing a nurturing environment, staff effectively promote an increased sense of stability in young people's lives. Social workers and parents commented on how impressed they were with the staff's ability to help young people settle in the home quickly. Taking into account the complexity and level of young people's needs, this is a real achievement. This has recently included one young person who was admitted in an emergency, in a heightened state of anxiety and being in care for the first time.</p> <p>Young people receive very good support to develop better control of their emotions and behaviours. Clear structures and daily routines, firm boundaries and a positive atmosphere in the home effectively promote young people's sense of order, calm and familiarity. They attend their schools regularly and reach good attainment. For example, some young people have obtained certificates in catering, vehicle maintenance and health and safety.</p> <p>Staff empower young people to have a voice. They advocate well on young people's behalf. They ensure that the young people have everything they need in order to continue to learn and develop. Staff also help young people with their communication skills which improves their engagement. An independent reviewing officer commented on how the home had enabled a young person to come to his care review. Although he had been in care for many years, this was the first time that he had felt comfortable enough to attend his care review. She saw this as a testament to the strength of the trusting relationship between the young person</p>	

and the staff. Another example of young people's enhanced participation is that their views on what made somebody a good staff member influenced the home's staff recruitment process.

Staff effectively promote young people's positive choices in day-to-day situations. Young people enjoy having healthy and nutritious meals of their choice. They are supported to lead an active lifestyle. They receive good support to access a wide range of recreational and creative activities in this company's own day centre and in the community. Having positive experiences and fun together has a positive impact on their self-confidence and social skills. Beautiful photographs clearly evidence this. The responsible individual commented on how she wanted to make this chapter of the young people's lives happy and memorable.

The physical environment is comfortably furnished, clean and very well maintained. The whole interior has been recently repainted. The young people and their parents commented on how nice the house was and that staff were caring.

The home also provides an effective short-break service. A parent of a child who uses the home for respite wrote: 'The home has come to the rescue on each occasion. I massively appreciate this, as your staff have been able to keep my lovely boy safe, stable and happy.'

Staff help young people to develop independence skills. They work proactively with social workers, teachers and families to ensure that the transition to adulthood is smooth. Staff have a strong sense of responsibility for young people. They are prepared to challenge the placing authority to always do what is best for the young people. They do not give up on the young people when they become 18 years old. On some occasions, staff have continued to provide care and accommodation for young adults, supporting them to be ready for their full move to adult services.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
<p>Some aspects of the home's practice in relation to safeguarding are weak. In particular, the practice relating to staff recruitment and fire safety do not consistently meet the standard of good safeguarding and protection.</p> <p>The home's written child protection and safeguarding procedure does not cover arrangements for countering the risks of suicide and self-harm. This has not had a negative impact on practice. The provider acknowledged this shortfall and set about amending the procedure immediately.</p>	

The home has failed to ensure that all staff have been thoroughly vetted. This exposes young people to the risk of being cared for by individuals who might not be fit for their role. An example of the incomplete staff recruitment information is not having explanations for the employment gaps on one of the staff files. This included a year leading to the staff member's employment in this home. Instead of seeking employment references, the home has accepted three character references as satisfactory. These included two references from referees who knew the prospective staff member as neighbours for fewer than two months. The provider has started a full audit of all staff recruitment files to make sure that each current staff member's file contains all the required information.

The lack of regular staff supervision and reduced management scrutiny have undermined the consistency of some aspects of practice. Some staff members occasionally keep one fire exit leading out of one bedroom locked. This practice would compromise a swift evacuation from the bedroom if one was needed. This shortfall was rectified immediately. Another example of the staff confusion relates to the reasons for having a keypad-operating lock on the door of one bedroom door. It transpired at the inspection that the lock was there only because the bedroom used to be an office, and that the lock was not actually needed. Some staff said, that, because of the lock, they never closed that door. The lock was removed at the inspection. How the locks are used and the restrictions to young people's access to certain areas of the home are not reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to be essential for the protection of their the young people's welfare. Locking of any fire exits compromises the time needed to evacuate the building.

Other arrangements for fire safety and other aspects of general health and safety are good. At the inspection, a clear message was reinforced to all staff members that they must not lock any fire exits, apart from the main entrance. Clear and safe arrangements are in place in relation to exiting through this door, if needed.

The home demonstrates close partnership working with other professionals. This includes the child and adolescent mental health service and education providers. This helps to create and implement strategies effectively for protecting young people from self-harm, when this is an issue. The occasional administration of sedatives to protect the young person from self-harm is supported by a robust multidisciplinary risk assessment and management plan. This is an example of really good joint working practice. The medication administration records are appropriately kept. However, when chemical restraint is used, this is not logged as a physical intervention.

Staff identify and manage the risks to the individual young people's health and welfare very well. They are highly attentive to the changes in the young people's moods. They are aware of any triggers for the young people's challenging behaviours. They respond proactively and effectively to any non-verbal and verbal signs of the young people's rising anxieties. They provide a safe environment and inspire young people with a sense of calm and security. By the well-targeted use of de-escalating behaviour management strategies, they have been effective in

resolving confrontations that are at a lower level of challenge.

The home's approach to the management of young people's behaviour and risks is proactive, collaborative, flexible, dynamic and successful. The young people's social workers identified this as one of the home's main strengths. They highlighted that the frequency and the intensity of incidents involving young people's challenging behaviour have significantly reduced.

A young person who used to abscond regularly from various places has never absconded from this home. Staff agreed a trust plan with him and enabled him to follow it. No young person has gone missing from this home. This has reduced the risk of their exposure to any form of child sexual exploitation or radicalisation.

Staff skills in forging protective relationships with young people and suitably high staffing levels have contributed to the effectiveness of the help and protection of young people. A mother said, 'Staff gave us confidence that our son is well looked after and safe with them.'

Owing to the high levels of the young people's emotional and behavioural needs, physical contact between them and staff members often occurs. Appropriate physical contact is described in the young people's support and risk management plans. However, staff are unaware that the home has a written policy on this and what it entails. This creates uncertainty in practice as to what constitutes appropriate touch. This confusion was highlighted to the manager who took immediate actions to ensure all staff understood what the policy and practice is.

Managers have a good working relationship with the local authority's designated officer for child protection. They are transparent in its communications with other professionals. No concern raised has met a child protection threshold.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
<p>The registered provider has failed to recruit a registered manager for the service for over seven months. An interim manager who was applying to register resigned before the process was completed. Another interim manager has meanwhile remained in charge of the day-to-day running of the home.</p> <p>The lack of a registered manager has had a negative impact on the service in a number of ways.</p> <p>The management oversight of records and practice has been weakened. The inefficient record-keeping, in particular in relation to physical interventions, has</p>	

undermined the quantitative analysis and monitoring for patterns and trends. Examples of this include a record of an incident that did not require a physical intervention being logged in the central log of physical interventions. The information on the log of some other physical interventions has not been fully completed. In addition the agreed approach to use chemical restraints for a young person was not recorded.

The home's records do not always provide a full picture of the young people's lives. Some of the records are data-system driven, rather than being relevant for the needs of young people. The actual care practice is much more personalised than the home's records of daily observations show. For example, staff record whether young people have had an epileptic seizure. However, none of the current young people has epilepsy or any other health condition that places them at a high risk of suddenly having seizures.

Staff members do not receive regular formal supervision. This denies them the opportunities to reflect on their practice with their line managers. For example, one staff member had not had any recorded supervision meetings in the last six months. The other two staff members whose supervision records were looked at had received only one supervision meeting each during the same period.

In the absence of a registered manager and with high turnover of staff, the responsible individual and the management team have, in their own words, focused on 'steadyding the ship'. They have continued to provide a clear vision for the service and to invest the resources needed. They have continued to motivate and support staff to put young people at the heart of the provision and achieve the home's statement of purpose.

The home works in an effective partnership with families, placing authorities and education and health professionals to support and promote young people's progress. The registered person has built a good reputation. The provision is highly valued. A mother said that the care her daughter received was fantastic and that she was 100% pleased with the home.

On a strategic level, the responsible individual's self-evaluation of the service is accurate. She is aware of the home's main strengths and weaknesses. She proactively sought more intensive and more challenging independent visitor's monthly reports. She responded positively to the independent visitor's detailed recommendations on how to improve the service. She and the team also took swift and decisive actions to address the issues identified at the inspection. Their desire to move the service forward is obvious. The registered provider accepted the lack of a registered manager has kept them back.

A comprehensive improvement plan is in place. The registered provider has set a clear direction for the further development and expansion of the service. Some of the recently implemented changes included the creation of additional management

roles, such as having a health services manager and a deputy manager for operations and staff training.

The home is committed to embedding a learning culture. Staff have good training and development opportunities. They receive comprehensive induction to their role and duties. The staff who have been working in this sector for fewer than two years are well supported to work towards achieving appropriate qualifications. The other staff members are appropriately qualified. Staff report having a sense of team identity. They have a strong commitment towards working together on improving their practice and supporting young people in the best ways possible.

The lack of a registered manager has, however, negatively affected the home's operational oversight and capacity for improvement. The instability in the management and the staff team has slowed down the implementation of the planned changes and the embedding of any improvement actions that have been taken. It has had a negative impact on the provider's ability to demonstrate consistent compliance with legislation and good practice.

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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