

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	12/07/2016
Unique reference number	SC047894
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Care Focus Limited
Registered provider address	Capital House Bury Street Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 1HH

Responsible individual	Jean Lloyd
Registered manager	Paula Warren
Inspector	Fiona Littlefield

Inspection date	12/07/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
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	Outstanding

SC047894

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- A skilled leadership team prioritises the welfare and safety of children extremely well. They provide a model of positive parenting which has created a culture of security and optimism within the home. Planning for new admissions is rigorous and takes the interests of the current group of resident into account.
- Staff are insightful and skilled in developing relationships with young people, providing highly personalised care. They demonstrate patience, sensitivity and humour under pressure.
- Systems for assessing risks in young people's behaviour are comprehensive and matched with effective management strategies. They are regularly reviewed and updated so that strategies keep young people safe are accurate. Staff are watchful and work as a team so that any new concerns or information is shared immediately. Young people are aware of this and it helps them feel secure.
- Staff encourage positive behaviour by using every opportunity to help young people reflect on the impact of their behaviour on themselves and those around them. In time young people become less defensive and more empathetic and respectful to others.
- All young people attend education and have made progress in academic subjects and against their individual objectives. Where young people have missed significant periods of education, they are helped to make up the gaps sensitively and purposefully. This is striking progress given their starting points.
- Partnership working is very good. Parents speak highly of the inclusive approach that staff take to building confidence between young people and their families. Professionals are very enthusiastic about the skills and commitment of staff and managers, in particular citing how they put the young person at the centre of their practice.
- Some shortfalls were identified during this inspection. Plans for moving into independence need to be organised so that progress can be tracked alongside agreed timescales. One self-medication risk assessment needs to be completed and the programme of redecoration and repair in the home to be finished in a timely fashion.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that internal pathway plans are structured to clearly outline how the home will support children to develop emotional and mental resilience to cope without the home's support and practical skills such as cooking, housework, budgeting and personal self-care. This plan should include timescales so that progress can be monitored and so that it is clear to children what progress has been achieved. (Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 17 paragraph 3.27)
- Ensure that children who wish to keep and take their own medication should be supported to, if they are able to do so safely, with particular reference to completing a risk assessment of this action. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 35 paragraph 7.16)
- Ensure that children's homes are nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, with particular reference to improving the state of decoration within the home and completing repairs to the fabric of the education unit. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 15 paragraph 3.9)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is one of a small group of homes run by an independent provider. It offers care for up to four children and young people. Education is available within the setting. Young people have direct access to therapy as part of the services offered to them by the company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
10/11/2015	Full	Good
24/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
10/12/2014	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>Young people make good progress because they benefit from warm and trusting relationships with staff who know them extremely well and speak of them fondly. Many young people come with a history of challenging and defensive behaviour but learn to relax and take stock of the impact of their behaviour. A police officer who had been involved with one young woman said: 'She has learnt to value herself and seems to recognise that she was being used. She has really gained in confidence, talks about her brothers lovingly and is more respectful to her mother. She feels cared for and that people are interested in her.'</p> <p>Staff and managers place a very high priority on educational progress and all young people are expected to attend the school on site. New arrivals are assessed in terms of their academic levels, behaviour and attitudes to school. This leads to a be-spoke programme which identifies personal objectives including what GCSE subjects might be possible and any gaps in learning. For some young people who have not been in education for many months, this can represent a formidable challenge. However, the head of education working alongside the registered manager is determined that they should achieve their full potential. All young people study maths and English as part of the national curriculum. Educational and care staff work closely together to support young people. For instance one young person refused to attend education as she felt conspicuous about the gaps in her learning. Teachers allocated specific work for her which she worked on in private supported by care staff. In time, her confidence grew to the point that she was able to join the others in the classroom. As a consequence of this coordinated and purposeful approach young people gain confidence in their ability and think more positively about the future. This is striking progress given their starting points.</p> <p>Some young people are preparing to move from the home into different placements nearer their families or into independent life. Former residents speak very highly of their experiences in the home which helped them prepare for their new lives. One ex-resident said: 'What I can do now and how I know how to do it is because of what they have taught me. Without them I would probably be homeless or dead.' However, the records of what independence work has been completed lack structure. This means that it is difficult to track what progress a young person is making and is expected to achieve within a specific timeframe. The registered manager and head of education are addressing this.</p> <p>Arrangements for managing medication are safe. However, one of the four young</p>	

people has been administering her own medication as part of an agreed plan. There is no risk assessment to cover this. This is an important gap in assessing the ability of young people to keep themselves safe. The registered manager is taking steps to rectify this.

Staff and managers work extremely well in partnership with both families and social workers. One social worker said: 'I can't fault their communication with me. It is regular and detailed. The young person is aware that we are all talking to each other and this helps her inner strength'. Most parents also speak highly of the support and empathy that they experienced from staff who have worked with the whole family to build relationships. The mother of one young person said: 'They treat me like part of the team, they back me up, talking to her and acting as a go-between. They've been absolutely brilliant. I feel that I have my daughter back.'

The home is a comfortable house with a homely feel. However, the fabric of the building needs some attention including re-decoration in some areas to refresh the environment. In addition the education rooms are currently out of bounds while some remedial work is done. As a result school time is taking place in the home itself. This has not helped young people who appreciate actually going to a separate building but is only planned for a limited period. The registered manager has a clear programme for redecoration and plans are in hand to restore the educational unit in time for the new academic year

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>Young people are safe because they are looked after by staff who are knowledgeable about them, their needs, background histories and any negative behaviours. Young people do not use the formal complaints procedure preferring to approach staff and managers directly and confidently so that issues and grievances are dealt with promptly. They do not always like the response they receive but they are clearly confident that they will be taken seriously and listened to by staff and managers. In time this means that they gain confidence and learn to resolve conflict openly.</p> <p>Each young person has a small team of allocated workers who have responsibility for different aspects of their care. These relationships are the building block for helping young people settle. Conversations are lively and often challenging so staff have to be steady and moderate in their response. For instance one young person spent an entire lunch break testing staff and managers about how far north they would allow her to go unsupervised, naming different towns and cities. The conversation ended in laughter but the pressure was real. This work takes time</p>	

and staff and managers have to be patient and persistent with young people. The notes of a statutory review for one young person state: 'Good relationships with staff. She is starting to engage but it will be a long time before she understands why people are concerned about her.' In time young people learn to relax. This is obvious in their demeanour and attitude to others, they are more empathetic and less defensive.

The staff group as a whole work together to monitor potential risks. For instance, young people in the home do not have access to phones or electronic devices unless they are supervised. However, both staff and managers do not rely on this, being aware that contact over the internet can occur without warning and that they need to be constantly alert. Staff receive training about this and are watchful for any unusual behaviours. The combination of routine and close working relationships with staff mean that young people are protected. The social worker for one young person said: 'It was sound that all her electronic tools have been taken from her. She understands this and it helped her feel safe.'

When considering any new referral, the manager is careful to ensure that their needs can be met in the home and that the impact on the current group can be managed. An initial risk assessment includes historical factors and major risks which are balanced with management strategies. This in turn is organised into an individual behaviour management plan with details about what may work best in the event of negative behaviour. Staff and managers routinely review and update these assessments on a monthly basis and recording focuses on balancing risk with progress and improvement. This core activity means any problems young people may experience are not allowed to drift and there is a clear plan to deal with them.

Staff and managers are insightful about young people and recognise that volatile behaviour may reflect confusion and past trauma. For instance, after an incident young people are asked for their views and will often claim to be indifferent to the consequences. Neither staff nor managers take such comments at face value using the key worker sessions to address issues with young people in the context of a trusting and secure relationship. The social worker for one young person said: 'She wanted to do well but needed to be shown how, she learnt through consistency and warmth from staff. She has good relationships now and is developing confidence.'

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
No requirements or recommendations were made following the last inspection. The registered manager gained her national vocation qualification (NVQ) level 5 in	

2014. She has 5 years working with young people in residential care of which over three are at managerial level. She is an effective and highly accomplished manager who has worked to develop a secure atmosphere in the home. A deputy manager, who is completing her to NVQ level 5 qualification this year, strengthens the management team and contributes to an impressive culture of patience, steadiness and resilience under pressure. Young people respond to this calm environment and while they can still be challenging on occasion, managers and staff always remain in control and consequently young people feel secure. During the inspection, one young person approached the inspector who was talking to the registered manager. Laughing she pointed to the manager and said: 'I'm terrified of her you know'. This shows tremendous confidence in their relationship.

The staff group is made up entirely of permanent workers. Some have no previous experience of working in a resident setting prior to coming to this home. However, the organisation places a high premium on professional development and all staff are either on the NVQ level 3 course or have enrolled to start once their probation has ended. Managers organise daily rotas so that there is a balance of skills amongst workers. Young people value this, responding to the younger workers who may share some of their interests but needing the reassurance of more established staff.

Staff have confidence in one another and speak highly of the management team who encourage a vibrant but controlled atmosphere in the home. All staff receive supervision which focuses on both issues in the home including key worker responsibilities and the impact that this may be having on them personally. Staff work as a team with the greatest value placed on sharing information through monthly house meetings and handovers between shifts. Staff are committed and have a notable sense of personal responsibility. For instance one member staff said: 'If something is raised in handover or we have been away on holiday we will look at incident reports to get the full update. I can't remember who taught me that but someone has because we all do it.' Young people benefit from being cared for by staff who themselves feel valued.

The registered manager has been particularly successful in creating links with the local community that can lead to very positive outcomes for young people in the home. For instance, as a result of the close collaboration between the registered manager and head teacher of a local school. They have agreed to work together on issues such as child sexual exploitation, sharing information and resources. In addition, one young person has recently started to attend a mainstream school in the area. The registered manager has liaised closely with the head teacher and other staff so that any incidents have been resolved quickly. As a result, the young person has gained sustained her place in school. This has the added benefit of being a key part of the plan for her to returning to her home area and has greatly enhanced the young person's self-esteem.

Many young people come to the home with a history of risky behaviours. The

registered manager is upbeat, positive and determined to improve their life chances. Using her own research, she has identified creative ways of approaching difficult and sensitive issues. For instance, she has adapted a specific resource for working young people about safe relationships. This has been used by allocated staff in their key working sessions with young people. This has helped some young people with very entrenched behaviours to reflect on what has happened to them and understand how to avoid it happening again. This imaginative approach has been an important step in helping them turn their lives around.

The registered manager maintains a robust overview of the quality of care in the home, using individual reports of any behaviour management incidents and feedback from meetings with both care and educational staff. She uses information from direct conversations with young people, their families, allocated social workers, independent visitor and outside professionals such as the police and youth offending teams. As a result of this comprehensive and dynamic approach, she is able to balance data with observations from a range of professionals and staff. This gives her a rounded understanding of the experiences of the young people in the home. The manager is protective of the young people and staff team but also challenging about practice in the home to improve life chances for young people.

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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