

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	04/08/2016
Unique reference number	1228522
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Wood Grove (childcare) Limited
Registered provider address	Holmere Hall, Dykes Lane, Carnforth LA5 9SN

Responsible individual	Paul Brosnan
Registered manager	Clare Cartwright
Inspector	Lynn O'Driscoll

Inspection date	04/08/2016
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

1228522

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- This service excels at providing a warm, nurturing, homely environment, and staff quickly establish open and honest relationships with the young people.
- All the young people are very happy, safe and settled at this home.
- Young adults who have successfully moved on into independent living are secure in the knowledge that they will receive ongoing practical and emotional support from the staff team.
- This home actively and effectively advocates for young people to ensure that they receive the most appropriate education that best meets their individual needs, so that they can reach their full potential.
- This home has the proven ability to secure excellent partnership working with families, which in turn positively promotes young people's sense of identity.
- Staff place the well-being of individual young people at the centre of their practice, and treat them with dignity and respect at all times, irrespective of the significant challenges that they may present.
- Staff safely and effectively manage some complex and challenging behaviours without the need to restrain young people.
- This home has a strong, child-focused management team that leads by example, providing very clear direction, supervision and support to a highly motivated staff team.
- There are particularly good internal auditing systems in place to identify patterns and trends, key strengths and areas requiring further development.

There are three areas for improvement. These are to ensure that internal and external monitoring reports demonstrate consultations with young people and relevant stakeholders, and also that the opinions of young people living in the home are considered when balancing the impact of accepting a new admission.

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
<p>44: Independent person: visits and reports</p> <p>Demonstrate that independent monitoring reports are informed by young people's views, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home when reaching an opinion about the arrangements for safeguarding and promoting children's well-being. (Regulation 44(2)(a) and (4)(a) (b))</p>	31/10/16
<p>45: Review of quality of care</p> <p>Ensure that the internal review of the quality of care provided in the home includes an evaluation of consultations with children, their parents, placing authorities and staff during that period, and a copy of the report is forwarded to Ofsted within 28 days of its completion. (Regulation 45(4)(a), (5))</p>	31/10/16

Recommendations

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

- To meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, the home should strengthen the impact of risk assessments by ensuring that the opinions of young people living in the home are considered prior to any new admission. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.9)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a private children's home registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five children and young people who may be experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties.

It is part of a wider organisation that also provides a school locally where some of the young people attend.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
N/A	This home was registered with Ofsted in January 2016.	This is the first inspection following registration.

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
<p>All the young people are very happy living in this home. The service excels at providing a warm, nurturing, homely environment and staff have the proven ability to establish open and honest relationships with the young people. Young people say that staff genuinely listen to them and can tell that the staff are interested in their views and experiences. Consequently, new admissions settle in very quickly. These include emergency placements when the usual gradual introductions are not possible. Comments from young people include, 'I had visited a friend who lived here and knew some of the staff, so I told my social worker that I wanted to live here even before it was an option. I am really happy here' and 'I don't usually like change but being here is a lovely change. I am so happy here.'</p> <p>Good staffing ratios enable the staff to be very attentive to individual needs and preferences. Young people are treated and respected as individuals in their own right, which makes them feel loved and valued. In particular, they feel comfortable enough to explore their emerging sexuality.</p> <p>They positively engage in young people's meetings and in frequent individual key-worker sessions where highly relevant and sensitive issues are fully discussed. Their opinions and feelings are central to the day-to-day running of the home, which increases their self-esteem. The staff also ensure that young people's wishes are positively acted on, if it is in their best interests. One young person said, 'Just after I came, I mentioned that I was hot at night and couldn't sleep. The next day, they bought me a fan. I also said I would like my hair permed and was told to be good. I didn't take much notice because in my other home I was always told that. After a week they had booked me an appointment. These little things show that they really care.'</p> <p>This home actively and effectively ensures that young people receive the most appropriate education that best meets their individual needs, so that they can reach their full potential. Two young people have also been supported to adjust to college life from a residential special school and children's home on the same site, a move that caused them some anxieties. Consequently, prior to admission, one young person's attendance at college was poor. This home immediately established effective working relationships with her tutor and, mindful of her learning difficulties, devised a timetable to ensure that the work was not too overwhelming. Consequently, with staff support, including acting as her models, she successfully caught up with all her practical assignments and has recently achieved a level 2 in</p>	

hair and beauty.

The strong and effective advocacy from the staff also prevented the suspension of another young person, enabling her to successfully complete an access course for a public services course starting in September. This shows that young people's career opportunities are significantly broadened and that they make significant progress from their starting points.

One young person recently took part in a Prince's Trust programme and her achievements were recognised on the local radio. She used her negotiation and practical skills learned at this home to full advantage when ringing local businesses asking them to provide the materials to redecorate and refurbish premises where young people could meet.

Young people have made and sustained positive friendships in the local community and they are warmly welcomed when they visit. One young person recently had a great time baking with her friend. Another is looking forward to cooking a full roast dinner for her partner. Realistically, given their ages, they often prefer to spend their free time with friends rather than engage in group activities. This means that good support systems are firmly established when they move on into independence.

One young person is currently on holiday in Spain with a young person recently discharged and her family. This demonstrates the excellent relationships established during their time together at this home. Moreover, she has positively chosen to await a tenancy in the local area, because of the importance of the friendships she has established, and to continue her studies.

Two young people have successfully returned home, which was their expressed wish.

Staff actively promote young people's good health, and rotas are carefully organised to ensure that young people can be accompanied to all health appointments if they want this support. One young person has recently moved to this home because she is pregnant. It was recognised that it provides a calm and supportive atmosphere where she can openly share all her mixed emotions.

The meals provided at this home are homemade, nutritious and thoroughly enjoyed by the young people. Mealtimes are relaxed social occasions. One young person said, 'I improved my diet when I lived at this home, joined the local gym and went boxing, so I got fitter and healthier.' All the young people take pride in their appearance and are empowered to celebrate their own highly individual styles.

A key aim of this home is to enable young people to gradually gain the practical, emotional and social skills necessary to successfully live independently in the

future. Consequently, for example, one young person keeps her bedroom and bathroom clean and tidy. She is competent in using public transport, shopping and cooking on a set budget, and doing her own laundry without being prompted. One young person said, 'I like it here because I get my own space and independence. My key worker is sound and I get a say in decisions about my life. When I asked to sleep out at a friend's house, they listened to me and it was agreed.'

The home has also ensured that all the young people have an independent advocate to support them in making complex decisions about their future. One placing authority has confirmed that their young person's placement is secured at this home until she feels ready to move into independence, and she is really pleased about this. It is a direct result of the good progress she has made.

Young people benefit from direct access to the company's clinical psychologist. She also provides specific advice to the team on how best to support young people's unique mental health and emotional needs. Consequently, self-injurious behaviours have demonstrably decreased in frequency and intensity in this home.

There is clear documentary evidence of a detailed discussion with young people to increase their awareness of 'legal highs' following a death in the local area. Despite known histories, there have been no incidents of cannabis misuse since the young people moved to this home. This has resulted in a marked positive effect on young people's behaviours, physical health and emotional well-being.

Staff make great efforts to ensure that young people leave this home in a gradual and positive manner. To date, one young person has moved on into independence. Moreover, he purposely lives locally, secure in the knowledge that staff will continue to support him.

Young people have developed some particularly strong attachments to staff. This enables them to express their feelings and difficulties, and to receive the appropriate support required. Consequently, they are gradually coming to terms with past events, gaining a more positive self-view and building emotional resilience to better deal with difficulties in the future. As a result, they are making wiser choices, including positive peer relationships.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
All the young people feel, and are, very safe and secure in this home, and enjoy excellent relationships with the staff. One young person is particularly benefiting from positive, caring, male role models. Young people feel genuinely cared about and listened to, and are confident that any concerns will be immediately	

addressed. They also get on well with their peers and confirm that there is no bullying in this home. Consequently, there have been no complaints or allegations.

Comments from young people include, 'I like the other young people here. I knew one before from my home town and she describes me as her little brother', 'I am happy and safe here. It feels like home. I can talk to the staff if I am worried about anything and they listen to me. I feel supported' and 'Sometimes I struggle to sleep because I have nightmares, but here I can come downstairs and chat to staff for a little while. Then I settle. I wasn't allowed to do that at my last home.'

There are clear and consistent boundaries to behaviours to safeguard and protect the welfare of all the young people. These are fully understood by the young people and they all confirm that they are fair.

There is a greater emphasis on encouraging and rewarding good behaviour and effort than imposing sanctions, which has the desired effect. To illustrate, in the last three-month period, there were 34 positive compared with three negative consequences. Comments from young people include, 'I got my eyebrows waxed for doing extra jobs in the house without being asked, and we went out for a lovely meal for completing my exams' and 'I got some extra clothes money for attending the Prince's Trust, which I was anxious about at first, and I was treated to a back massage for getting the home clean and tidy and making a meal for my auntie's visit.'

Staff clearly place the well-being of individual young people at the centre of their practice and treat them with dignity and respect at all times, irrespective of the significant challenges they may present.

A key strength of this home is the staff's ability to safely and effectively manage some complex and challenging behaviours without resorting to physical interventions. One young person with a significant history of physical aggression and criminal damage has had no incidents in this home. He said, 'In my last placement, I was restrained nearly every day. Here there is nothing to rebel against. I love it and feel so relaxed. I really want to stay.'

The appropriate use of restorative practices is effectively developing young people's sense of personal responsibility, reducing the need for formal police intervention and preventing further criminalisation. Consequently, to his credit, one young person gradually developed strategies to better control his intense feelings and emotions without resorting to assaults and criminal damage. One young person said, 'I have been in lots of places and had different specialists, but if you want to fix a child, just send them here. It's calm, relaxing and lovely, and it works.'

A key aim of this home is to empower young people to take the age-appropriate risks necessary for their continuing development into adulthood. This also means

continually learning strategies to protect themselves when online or in the community.

Despite some very complex histories, incidents of going missing have ceased altogether for the vast majority of young people, and have significantly reduced in frequency and duration for another. This young person did not consider herself to be missing, arguing that she had wanted to spend more time with friends from college. Her views were listened to and, in response, arrangements were made to enable her to stay overnight with a friend as long as she agreed to keep in touch with staff, so that they were assured she was safe and well. This arrangement has proved highly effective. Consequently, there have been no missing from home incidents, or young people placing themselves in unsafe situations, for over six weeks.

All the required external and internal health and safety checks are undertaken in a timely manner to ensure a safe and well-maintained home. Young people have been actively involved in choosing the décor and accessories, which has created a particularly homely atmosphere. This demonstrates their strong sense of pride and belonging in their surroundings. Young people love their bedrooms, which are highly personalised. One young person said, 'As soon as I came I was given money to buy things for my room. I chose a duvet and bean bag and now they've got me my own television. It's just great here.'

Impact risk assessments are completed prior to any new admission, taking into account the needs, vulnerabilities and risks of young people already in the home. These also consider any gaps in expertise. For example, staff completed 'rescue from ligature' training specifically in preparation for a new admission. This is a good, proactive approach to ensure that everyone is kept safe. However, the documents do not detail the preferences and concerns of young people already living in the home to inform the matching process.

The stringent selection and recruitment processes ensure a safe and competent workforce.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>This is the first inspection following registration in January this year. The home has clearly significantly strengthened its service delivery in its first seven months of operating.</p> <p>This home is very well managed by a suitably qualified, experienced and child-</p>	

focused individual who leads by example and gives her staff very clear direction, supervision and support.

In turn, good deputising arrangements are in place. The deputy manager has excellent organisational skills and is ensuring that robust internal audits are in place and that young people's continued progress is clearly evidenced.

Together, the managers actively involve all the staff team in the continual development of the home. Consequently, morale and commitment are high and there is a strong sense of shared responsibility and accountability. Comments from staff include, 'We are a good close-knit team working well together', 'I am proud to be a member of this team and it is well managed', 'I love working here and particularly the time to build sound relationships with the young people' and 'This home offers lots of interesting and relevant training.'

The managers ensure that the home is always well staffed to safeguard and promote the welfare of all the young people, and to meet their unique and complex needs and personal preferences effectively.

A key strength of this home is securing excellent partnership working with families, which in turn positively promotes young people's sense of identity. Families also feel actively involved in care planning and say that their opinions are genuinely respected. Consequently, they are highly satisfied with the quality of care provided at this home. One man wrote, 'My grandson is extremely well cared [for] and looked after. The staff really understand the young people. He is safe here and making good progress. It's as close to a family home as you can get. The communication is excellent so I am kept up to date on a very regular basis.'

Staff benefit from continual and relevant training opportunities. These are purposely offered to meet organisational needs, their own professional development needs and the specific needs of the young people currently living in the home. Recent examples of the latter include autism training and a 'gender variant children and trans adolescents' course. One member of staff said, 'The recent autism awareness training was very good and very informative. It helped us to reflect on how we can adjust our practice.'

Staff confirm that they receive regular good-quality supervision that supports and challenges their individual performance. This enables them to continually improve their practices. They also feel comfortable to explore issues openly and honestly in team meetings, thus ensuring an agreed and consistent approach to meeting individual young people's needs.

The statement of purpose is regularly reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure that it always accurately reflects the current aims, policies, practices and staffing of the home.

The manager's report, following a review of the quality of care provided, is an accurate and analytical assessment of the home. However, it does not include an evaluation of the views of young people, their parents, placing authorities and staff during the review period that has taken place.

At least one young person's file and a staff recruitment file are externally scrutinised each month to ensure that they include all the required up-to-date information. They are consistently found to be in good order. In fact, all the required documentation is maintained at a good standard. Independent visitors particularly highlight 'child-friendly placement plans' and 'extremely detailed risk assessments that are regularly updated', both of which 'demonstrate young people's input'.

Managers say that in practice the monthly external monitoring visits are rigorous, but this is not always reflected in the reports and they have already challenged the quality of these. In particular, there are a number of repeated sentences, so it is not always clear exactly what was explored on any particular visit. Moreover, they are regularly visiting during school hours so there are minimal meaningful consultations with young people and staff. Despite recorded efforts, there is no feedback at all from parents or relatives. In response, Ofsted has been informed that senior managers of the wider organisation are monitoring the robustness of this process over the next few months, and if no improvement is seen they will seek the services of another independent company.

Notifications of significant incidents are forwarded to Ofsted in a timely manner. These show that appropriate action is taken, in full collaboration with relevant safeguarding agencies, to safeguard and protect the welfare of the young people, and that appropriate strategies are put in place to prevent a recurrence.

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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