

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	10/08/2016
Unique reference number	1183621
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	A & T Home Limited
Registered provider address	L B Group, Unit 7, Hydra, Great Blakenham, Ipswich IP6 0LW

Responsible individual	Jeremy Jayasuriya
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Joanna Heller

Inspection date	10/08/2016
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	One compliance notice was issued on 20 May 2016. A monitoring visit took place on 27 June 2016, where it was found that the provider had taken insufficient action to meet the notice. A further compliance notice was served on 1 July 2016. This inspection judges that this compliance notice has now been complied with.
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	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	Requires improvement

1183621

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- Fire arrangements are not consistently in line with good practice. For example, fire extinguishers are not always visible and there is no risk assessment/management plan in place regarding children propping open their bedroom doors, which are fire doors.
- There is currently no registered manager in post.
- Staff are not always provided with training relevant to the work that they perform.
- Recruitment practices are not sufficiently robust. References are not verified with a telephone call to ensure their validity, and staff's health is not verified to ensure that they are physically and mentally fit to perform their role.
- Records are not always maintained as required by regulation. On occasion, the lack of detail means that the support provided is not effectively evidenced.
- The independent visitor's report is not of sufficient depth to help to drive improvement.

The children's home strengths

- The children have made progress in relation to their education, health, behaviour and social skills.
- Staff provide individualised child-focused care and the children feel consulted on all aspects of their life. The children enjoy their time with staff, whom they have been able to develop bonds with.
- The staff provide a programme of fun and stimulating activities which keeps the children engaged and active.
- The home demonstrates a strong commitment to children's learning and development.
- The children are helped to reflect on their behaviour and its impact on others. They are also beginning to develop skills in repairing damaged relationships.
- Staff have built positive relationships with children's families and partner professionals.
- Individual staff are highly committed to the children. They positively advocate for them when they feel that other agencies' actions are not in the child's best interests.
- The children and staff benefit from a safe, well-maintained, decorated and comfortable environment.
- The provider and staff team have worked solidly together to bring about improvement within the service within a short space of time.

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 '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>The registered person must ensure that the requirements of the regulatory reform (fire safety) order 2005 and any regulations made under it are complied with in respect of the home.</p> <p>In particular, ensure that all fire doors remain closed in the absence of a suitable risk assessment and ensure that all fire extinguishers are clearly visible and accessible. (Regulation 25(2)(b))</p>	16/09/2016
<p>The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home, if there is no registered manager in respect of the home.</p> <p>In particular, appoint a suitably qualified and experienced manager and ensure that an application for their registration as manager of the home is submitted. (Regulation 27(1)(a))</p>	30/09/2016
<p>The registered person must only employ an individual to work at the children's home if the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform, and when full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2.</p> <p>In particular, ensure that staff health is explored and references verified. Furthermore, ensure that staff undertaking recruitment activities have completed safer recruitment training. (Regulation 32(3)(c)(d))</p>	26/09/2016
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees receive appropriate supervision and undertake appropriate continuing professional development.</p> <p>In particular, they must ensure that all staff receive suitable training in child sexual exploitation and any particular needs of the children placed, such as management of self-harming behaviours. (Regulation 33(4)(a)(b))</p>	26/09/2016

<p>The registered person must keep in relation to a children's home the records specified in Schedule 4.</p> <p>This is in particular relation to maintaining an accurate copy of the staff duty roster of persons working at the home, including the actual rosters worked. (Regulation 37(2)(a))</p>	<p>16/09/2016</p>
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Recommendations

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

- The registered person is responsible for ensuring that all their staff have been adequately trained in the principles of restraint and any restraint techniques appropriate to the needs of the children that the home is set up to care for, as defined in the home's statement of purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.57)
- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a private company. The home is registered to provide a service for up to four children and young people. It is a task-focused assessment unit working with children aged 7 to 11, helping them reunite with their families and/or secure permanence in their future. The service has a therapeutic ethos and ongoing family outreach services are available, if required.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/5/2016	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Requires improvement</p>
<p>There has been some progress since the last inspection, however, there remain some shortfalls that need to be addressed by the management team to make further improvements to the service.</p> <p>The children’s individual needs are met effectively and, as a result, they begin to show improvement in their behaviour, communication, education and self-esteem. Staff are effectively guided by suitable care plans which reflect the children’s individual needs and challenges, including how these can best be met. One placing social worker said, ‘reading his previous file notes, it now doesn’t seem like the same child. They are really really good for him. They have helped him take the next step towards a successful fostering placement.’</p> <p>Medication and healthcare arrangements in the home have improved significantly since the last inspection, ensuring that children’s medical needs are met and their well-being effectively safeguarded. For example, medication records are accurate and demonstrate that children receive the correct medication. Staff who administer medication have received suitable training and their competence to administer medication is assessed. The vast majority of staff have received training in epilepsy management and first aid. A first aid trained member of staff is on duty at all times. Children’s health plans contain suitable guidance for staff on managing any complex care needs, such as epilepsy and how to administer any emergency remedy.</p> <p>The children’s physical health has improved. Staff promote positive health through healthy lifestyles and effective role modelling. As a result, children are engaging in a healthier lifestyles, eating a wider diet and enjoying activities, such as rugby and swimming. This has enabled one child to reduce their weight significantly, by over three stones, which they say is helping them to feel fitter and more confident. Children who were previously somewhat reclusive are now developing their social skills and confidence. Families and professionals comment on children’s improved emotional well-being. One psychologist said, ‘I have no doubt that this is making a huge difference. The quality of therapeutic input has been extremely high.’ A family member said that the child’s ‘view on life has completely changed. It’s now very positive.’</p> <p>The staff team, while still experiencing some change, now has sufficient stability to provide continuity of care. Children develop strong attachments to individual staff and comment on their sadness at the loss of particular members of staff. One said, ‘it’s not as good as it used to be. I miss X.’ They animatedly spoke about staff and</p>	

described their joy in working together, taking care of the garden and growing sunflowers, tomatoes and basil, and another referred to a particular member of staff as making the 'best bacon sandwich ever'!

The children enjoy the time that they spend with staff, sharing the latest funny internet video or gaming craze, visiting the zoo, or chatting about the day at settling time before bed. They enjoy local clubs, pet ownership, days out to a theme park and, on occasion, their first short-break holiday. They are regular members of the local climbing club, and staff describe them as 'glowing' when achieving a recognition trophy. All of these opportunities broaden their social and emotional experiences, as well as promoting improved resilience.

The home demonstrates a strong commitment to children's learning and development. This has enabled one previously highly resistant and out-of-school child to reengage positively, meeting 100% of their required attendance as part of their phased return. Staff describe how it fills them with joy to watch this child rediscover their joy in learning, and take pride in their attendance and uniform. There is proactive liaison with the virtual head and local authorities to promote improved educational arrangements. The well-used learning zone provides an environment where specifically employed learning staff provide planned challenging and stimulating educational-style activities geared to the child's individual interests.

Regular well-planned arrangements ensure that children and their extended families are able to maintain frequent contact. Staff provide an individualised approach, with the children demonstrating good knowledge of their individual needs. Comments from families and partner professionals included, 'I think they're really good with him', 'They know him really well' and 'He is very positive about the home. He likes it.'

The children's views are listened to and, where they raise concerns, these are responded to. The children are supported by staff who are sensitive to their individual needs and maintain a non-judgemental approach in the face of challenge. Where children move on from the home, staff are sensitive to how this can best be managed to minimise distress. For example, staff made themselves available at short notice to travel a significant distance in order best to support a child who was moving on. The home maintains an ongoing commitment to provide a therapeutic outreach service to support children after they leave, where this is appropriate.

The home is a spacious, detached house with generous living space. The children describe enjoying making homes for local wildlife. The interior accommodation is almost unrecognisable from a few months ago, and now provides children with a safe, homely and well-maintained environment.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
<p>The children have made some improvements in relation to their behaviour, being missing from care and personal safety. Families and partner professionals say that the children have always felt safe. One said, 'Is he safe here? I don't have any doubts', and another, 'He connects with the staff and feels happy and safe.'</p> <p>Following significant incidents in the home, improved security and storage arrangements have been implemented, better safeguarding children and others. For example, window restrictors have been fitted, preventing children from accessing the office, sharp knives and carpentry tools are now stored securely and all rubble has been removed. Fire safety arrangements have improved in the past few months. For example, each child now has a suitable personal emergency evacuation plan and all staff have received fire instruction. However, particular risks remain. For example, children wedge open their bedroom doors, yet there is no risk management plan in relation to this. Furthermore, fire extinguishers are not always stored so that they are clearly visible and accessible to staff in an emergency.</p> <p>There have been no instances of children going missing, despite them previously having concerning patterns of missing with associated risks, such as potential gang involvement. Suitably detailed individual missing from care risk assessments highlight vulnerability and provide staff with effective guidance in how to respond. As a result, staff responses to children leaving the home are effective. The interim acting manager has met with the local police, promoting effective partnership working and better knowledge of the children placed at the home.</p> <p>Staff are alert to issues of conflict between the children and act to address any concerns. As a result, children say that bullying is not something experienced within the home. Behaviour management strategies are beginning to make a positive difference and the children are supported by staff who can anticipate and successfully de-escalate many of the challenging daily situations. While they continue to present heightened situations regularly, the intensity and frequency have reduced and they are able to calm more effectively. They have improved self-regulatory behaviours and are now much more able to reflect. The restorative approach has helped children to begin to understand the impact of their behaviour and develop skills to repair fractured relationships.</p> <p>Thresholds for physical restraint are clear and no inappropriate restraints are used. Training has now been provided in physical intervention for the vast majority of staff. However, some regular bank staff who have previously received training in using physical restraint have yet to receive training in the particular methods used within the home. This means that there may not be consistency of approach, potentially undermining interventions. Records do not evidence that children</p>	

always receive an offer of medical attention, nor is there always clear record of the effectiveness of the restraint. The arrangements for the review and monitoring of restraint are not sufficiently robust, and the management review does not challenge missing information. These shortfalls undermine the ability to provide effective reflection and review which contribute to meeting the ongoing and changing needs of children.

Staff undertaking recruitment practices have not received safer recruitment training. Furthermore, the provider does not ensure that staff are physically and mentally fit or that references are verified to ensure their validity. This means that information which would potentially have a bearing on their suitability may not be identified and thus undermine the robustness of the otherwise effective recruitment practices.

Effective links to the local safeguarding children's board have been established, promoting an effective investigation into any allegations. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children. The vast majority of staff have undertaken basic e-learning in safeguarding training, and training in child sexual exploitation is planned. However, e-learning on its own does not effectively allow staff to explore the complexities of safeguarding. Furthermore, staff have not undertaken training in identifying and working with children who self harm, despite having some children placed who have low-level self-harming behaviour. It is imperative that staff receive good-quality training which is regularly updated in order to manage risk effectively and robustly protect children.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
<p>The previous registered manager left in June and, while a replacement has been identified, they have yet to take up post. Therefore, there is no single person to provide clear and consistent day-to-day management of the home. However, interim management arrangements are appropriate and have successfully provided improved management oversight of the home. For example, following the previous inspection, compliance notices were served as the provider had not been able to deliver the caring experience to children that was set out in the statement of purpose. While improvement was slow to get started, under this management partnership, the quality of care and leadership of the home have recently improved.</p> <p>The management team and staff have worked hard in recent weeks to secure improvement within the service. Within a relatively short space of time, the quality of record keeping, staff deployment, staff training and risk management have all</p>	

significantly improved. One staff said, it feels like 'working in a whole different environment, with an improved structure communication and better training'.

While there continue to be some changes, the provider has improved the levels, consistency and stability of staff through further recruitment and direct employment of proven agency staff. This has ensured appropriate staffing arrangements which meet children's individual needs. Staff deployment arrangements are improved and staff no longer undertake excessive working patterns without taking an extended break from the home. In addition, improved staffing consistency is facilitating a better knowledge of the children's needs and improved relationships with children. As a result, staff are able to prioritise the needs of the children, even in the most demanding situations, in accordance with the statement of purpose.

Feedback on the commitment and qualities that individual staff display are consistently positive. One family member said, 'He adores the new member of staff X, but there is no member of staff whom he doesn't like.' Others said, 'staff are really lovely' and 'every member of staff has been really friendly'. One social worker, reflecting on the difficulties of the placement over a sustained period, emphasised how staff had helped to reduce some of the levels of concern, saying 'I don't think it's been good enough in general, but he's had a lot of good care from staff.'

An effective induction process is in place for permanent staff which covers key information and activities. A suitable system is in place to ensure that agency staff receive essential information and guidance regarding children's needs and emergency procedures. Regularly employed staff now benefit from effective professional individual supervision arrangements, as well as access to therapeutic support to help to support their resilience. All staff who have worked in a children's home for more than two years have completed suitable level 3 training in working with children. The core staff team has received appropriate training in areas such as first aid, fire awareness, medication management and epilepsy management. In order to promote effectively staff competence and their ability to meet children's needs fully, staff training is required in areas such as managing self-harm and child sexual exploitation, and further exploration of safeguarding, to build on the existing e-learning.

The provider works effectively in partnership with parents, police and local authorities to promote positive outcomes. The children are supported by staff who have their best interests at heart and who are prepared to challenge placing authorities when they feel that the actions are not in the best interests of the child.

Effective systems are now in place to ensure that significant events are notified in a timely manner to appropriate partner agencies and Ofsted. No complaints regarding the setting have been received since the last inspection.

Recording within the home has improved, but on occasion remains lacking in

accuracy or clarity. For example, accurate staff rotas are not held and the records of physical interventions are not consistently sufficiently detailed. This means that some records do not provide the required information or that the information is not easily accessible. The independent visitor's report is not effectively assisting the provider to drive improvement. For example, the visitor does not monitor and assist the home in its progress against the requirements set either by the last inspection or the statutory compliance notice served. Furthermore, the reports are not submitted to the provider or Ofsted in a timely manner. While this does not directly impact on children, these visits are not effectively fulfilling their purpose in assisting the home, or Ofsted as the regulator, to understand areas for development and progress made.

The provider does have an understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the home. Their improved oversight and management of the home has instigated positive change and, as result, there is significant improvement in the home and the quality of care that children receive. The vast majority of the requirements and recommendations set at the last inspection have been met. Some children have made good progress and all children have made some progress in their time at the home, and there is improved evidence of good practice. The provider and their staff have aspirations for the home and they are motivated to deliver a good service to children.

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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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