

## Children's homes inspection – Full

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>24/08/2016</b>
<b>Unique reference number</b>	<b>SC431806</b>
<b>Type of inspection</b>	<b>Full</b>
<b>Provision subtype</b>	<b>Children's home</b>
<b>Registered provider</b>	<b>SWAAY Child and Adolescent Services Limited</b>
<b>Registered provider address</b>	<b>591 London Road, Sutton, Surrey, SM3 9AG</b>

<b>Responsible individual</b>	<b>Gerard Berry</b>
<b>Registered manager</b>	<b>Sasha Austria</b>
<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Chris Peel</b>

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>24/08/2016</b>
<b>Previous inspection judgement</b>	<b>Sustained effectiveness</b>
<b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>This inspection</b>	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Good</b>

**SC431806**

## **Summary of findings**

### **The children's home provision is outstanding because:**

- All children and young people who come to live at this home bring previous experiences and behaviours which are extremely challenging for them and others. The expert help and care offered by managers, staff and other professionals here greatly enhances their life chances.
- Leaders and staff have learned lessons well from historical concerns and safeguarding issues elsewhere in the organisation. As a result, there is ever-increasing confidence in the organisation among professionals and families. One parent commented that 'before my son came here it was a nightmare, but they are fantastic, absolutely. We now have peace of mind.'
- There is very close collaboration between the different areas of provision for children and young people. As a result, most are making significant progress across a range of developmental areas, particularly in therapy and education. The insight that one young person, in particular, has developed is especially noteworthy.
- The manager ensures that children and young people benefit from living in safe, homely surroundings with staff who are responsive to their wishes and feelings. At the same time, staff challenge young people to address poor coping strategies and behaviours. It is therefore possible to see why a parent could say that her son is 'a lot more settled, although it is harder for him' – a remarkable balance to have achieved.
- Staff help young people to mature by their interaction with them. They encourage reflection, help young people to make better choices, to understand the consequences of their actions, and to meet and overcome challenges.
- Staff prepare children and young people very well to manage in the outside world both by developing independence skills such as cooking, keeping rooms tidy and budgeting, and by encouraging them to experience life in the wider community.
- The provider organisation is making excellent use of research, in particular the application of the theoretical model which underpins their own work. This is having a very positive impact on staff practice and, in turn, on the experiences and progress of children and young people.

## **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):

- The registered person should have a workforce plan, which should detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice and keep appropriate records for staff in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

The home is registered to accommodate up to four young males with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned and is one of six run by the service provider. All children and young people have access to the organisation's specialist therapeutic service and to their school.

### Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/10/2015	Full	Outstanding
16/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
23/10/2014	Full	Good

## Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<p>Young people who spoke to inspectors said how much they enjoy living in this home. They like the space, the facilities, their rooms and the garden. The lounge, kitchen and downstairs bathroom have all recently been refurbished. Young people were involved in choosing colour schemes and some furniture and fittings. They are encouraged to contribute to the home's upkeep by completing daily chores. They can earn extra pocket money by doing additional jobs. Parents and professionals who have visited comment favourably on how clean and welcoming the home always is.</p> <p>Young people's views are sought in a variety of ways, including in key-worker sessions, home meetings (which any of them can call, if they want a matter to be discussed), a recently introduced suggestions box, or by raising issues directly with the manager or staff. Children and young people are encouraged to make a formal complaint if matters are not dealt with to their satisfaction, and information about obtaining advocacy is also available. When young people voice dissatisfaction, they are responded to positively by staff and all significant matters are recorded.</p> <p>Young people sometimes object to staff's regular reminders to do their household chores, saying that they feel 'got at'. Observations made during the inspection indicate that staff are patient in their approach; the manager agreed to discuss further with young people. This consultation and collaboration successfully engages children and young people and they learn the benefit of contributing to it.</p> <p>The young people feel very well supported by staff. While they feel staff occasionally push them a little too hard, young people believe staff work hard to support them. For example, they know that one staff member did not take leave in order to support a young person. This empathy and respect are traits they have learned through interactions here with staff.</p> <p>The self-esteem of the children and young people has been raised through activities such as raising funds for an international charity.</p> <p>The staff of the home liaise closely with the school to support young peoples' learning, assisting with homework and holding revision sessions. One young person remarked that a member of staff had obtained past examination papers for him to use, and particularly appreciated that he had done so on his own initiative.</p> <p>The majority of young people make remarkable educational progress when they start at the provider's school. One parent commented that his son has 'a good chance of getting into college and he would never have achieved that in the state</p>	

system'. Another family member was 'absolutely thrilled with the schoolwork' that a young person has been doing, adding that 'he would not have achieved what he has if he had been at home'.

Young people respond well to the care and support they are given. Those spoken to said, 'we are here to change'. They acknowledge this is 'stressful' and not easy to achieve, but that they are supported well to make progress. This is as true for managing their feelings and behaviour as it is for taking responsibility for tasks such as opening a bank account. A professional spoke of a young person 'now engaging with in-house provision and staff encouragement 24/7' and, as a result, 'coming to terms with previous behaviour'. A parent commented that her son 'is now getting the treatment that he needs, so he is learning, realising his mistakes'. Another parent described how his son's move on from the home 'could have been an unmitigated disaster, but because of the support of staff, he was able to keep it together'.

When children and young people do not make expected progress managers and staff analyse why and quickly implement change. One professional commented that, when a young person finds it hard to engage with the help offered, 'staff have the enthusiasm to make it work and give him a lot of encouragement', adding, 'education has been creative and the therapy team has been supportive'. As a result, there are signs that gradual improvements are being made.

Placement plans are highly effective. They focus well on young people attaining goals across a range of developmental areas. These demonstrate significant progress over time, as measured by children, young people and the staff working with them in education, therapy and residential provisions. The plans are being honed to focus on fewer overall aims, so that young people can keep in them mind better and staff can track trends graphically.

	Judgement grade
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<p>Young people admitted to this home may bring significant risks, which the home is highly skilled at managing, minimising and giving young people insight into self-management. Young people spoken to said that they get on well with key workers, 'who would sort out' any issues that were raised with them. One young person said he had experienced bullying in the home, but that staff had quickly addressed it.</p> <p>Managers carefully assess whether the home is able to meet the needs of young people referred or who may transfer from one of the other homes in the group. This has meant that prospects for young people are enhanced as soon as they move in and even early on in placements, it is possible to detect improvement in areas of social interaction and expanding life experiences.</p>	

Staff engage with young people in a friendly way, while being clear about behavioural boundaries. Staff have strong skills, experience and an understanding of each young person's character which helps them meet their needs.

Staff manage levels of supervision for young people very well. Any changes to the initially close supervision, and moves toward more independence, are carefully considered before allowing greater freedom. These are implemented through a series of predetermined steps which balance individual risk with the need to promote young people being responsible for themselves in the wider community. Support is given to young people to manage their behaviour and to keep safe through an extensive therapy programme complemented by the care that is offered by staff. This is enabling children and young people to make significant and sustained progress.

There are occasions where young people go missing. Protocols are in place for such events and these are precisely followed by staff to safeguard young people as swiftly as possible. An arrangement is in place with the manager of another home within the organisation to interview any young person concerned independently on each occasion, so that any issues can be addressed as soon as possible. This is effective practice affording timely interviews, especially as placing authorities may be at some distance and find it hard to facilitate this themselves.

The home has good links with the local safeguarding children's board and police through senior managers. This means that effective partnerships are forged that lead to better management of risk and to safeguarding young people if, for example, they go missing. One young person was subject to a child protection concern which was handled very well; a family member said, 'we couldn't fault them once the problem came to light. He now feels safe and we feel he is, too.' This is borne out by the inspector's observations.

A review of staff files demonstrates that safer recruitment processes are rigorously followed and that new staff are thoroughly inducted into their roles. This includes expectations about behaviour that promote safe and open relationships, while remaining friendly and supportive. Children and young people are therefore safeguarded by measures taken before staff first work with them.

Young people, families and professionals all appreciate the support given by the manager and staff to maintain significant relationships, particularly through facilitating contact with families. Parents commented on the lengths that staff went to, enabling visits to go ahead even when faced with last-minute problems.

The home is extremely well maintained. Staff pay great attention to ensuring it is a safe environment and monitoring logs are meticulously kept.

	Judgement grade
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Good</b>



As a result of safeguarding concerns arising in other homes owned by the provider, senior managers have implemented changes across the organisation. All staff are aware of expectations regarding professional conduct. The home manager has been proactive in establishing the boundaries for her team and, as a result, staff are acutely aware of the kinds of behaviour that could undermine positive, authentic relationships that are fundamental to the work they do. They challenge, for example, the use of nicknames for staff by young people, as this weakens the sense of the adults' appropriate authority.

Minutes of team meetings and supervision for staff record how difficult issues have been sensitively but openly addressed. This has led to greater cohesion and improved morale, and so to a team that is willing to develop and learn.

Despite not being in post for long, the manager has quickly established a commendable ethos of supportive, reflective relationships between staff, in which learning together is vital. This is typified by the debriefing sessions that have been introduced at the end of shifts. These allow workers to share feelings about the events of the day, providing an opportunity to note what went well and what did not, as well as relieving them of stress that they might otherwise take away. As a result, young people benefit from staff who are resilient and resourceful working with them. They, too, see that mutual respect and nurturing relationships are important and, even if not always able to reciprocate, know that it will be extended to them.

Excellent training has been provided to enable staff to support this ethos with effective care. Staff are enthusiastic about the approach being adopted by the provider and readily give examples of practice that has changed as a result, such as no longer resorting too readily to sanctions as a means of correcting behaviour. Rather, staff will take time to work through with a young person why they acted in a particular way, thinking about alternatives that may be more respectful, less risky and ultimately of greater benefit.

Behind this lies a range of documentation that both promotes the work being done and facilitates its recording – and both are done to an exceptionally high standard. Emotional and behavioural response plans (which have replaced behaviour management plans) are now thoroughly embedded in practice. These guide staff in how to help young people to stay in, or return to, a calm state. Young people engage with these to different degrees, but they are more than 'subjects' in the plans, being actively encouraged to contribute to them. In one of the best examples, a young person has identified the cycle of his own behaviour, what signals he observes in himself that indicate an elevated emotional state and then what strategies he can use to regain control.

Key-worker sessions are used very effectively and are recorded in exemplary fashion, with up-to-date information and outcomes clearly presented. Records show the issues that young people have raised as well as those brought by members of staff, and identify suitable actions to take forward.

The manager has an effective audit process in place for these and other files kept

in the home that ensures that every single one of them is well maintained.

There is evidence in case files that paperwork from other agencies is chased, when necessary. A new escalation policy put in place by the organisation gives robust guidance for staff on addressing the problem of essential reports and minutes not being produced in a timely manner.

There are strong links with other agencies. The local constabulary, particularly, believes that it is 'very well engaged with the home'.

Supervision and appraisals are held regularly, and staff report that they meet their needs. The records show that all elements of effective supervision are covered, including the emotional impact of the work, delegated tasks and developmental needs. This is practice of the highest order. It demonstrates care of each staff member and shows that their views are important. This successfully models what the staff then provide for the young people.

A developmental plan is in place for the home that shows the manager has high aspirations and wants to improve practice continually, however many of the areas of work are described as 'ongoing' rather than specific targets with a timescale.

All except one previous recommendation has been addressed fully. However, impact risk assessments still lack rigour. The most recent contains very similar flaws to those seen in previous inspections, as the assessments do not specifically address potential risks for those already resident in the home or, indeed, the staff or the wider community. There is always a period of adjustment for all involved when a child or young person is admitted, but without an adequate assessment it is difficult to judge if early misgivings are a result of this or if there are underlying issues that have not been identified or sufficiently attended to. The recommendation of the interim inspection has therefore been repeated.

Senior managers have researched evidence-based models of work and are in the process of implementing these in educational, therapeutic and residential settings. This is enhancing the unified approach taken across their homes and evidences the strong commitment of the organisation to improving outcomes for children and 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. The inspectors have evaluated how well managers monitor the performance of the children's home to check what difference it makes 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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