

Children's homes inspection – Full

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| Inspection date | 03/10/2016 |
| Unique reference number | SC459857 |
| Type of inspection | Full |
| Provision subtype | Children's home |
| Registered provider | St Christopher's Fellowship |
| Registered provider address | St Christopher's Fellowship, 1 Putney High Street, London SW15 1SZ |

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| Responsible individual | Ron Giddens |
| Registered manager | Jennifer Hiskey |
| Inspector | Barnaby Dowell |

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| Inspection date | 03/10/2016 |
| Previous inspection judgement | Sustained effectiveness |
| 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 |

SC459857

Summary of findings

The children's home's provision is good because:

- Young people say they are very happy in their home and develop close and trusting relationships with staff members.
- The home benefits from a proactive safeguarding culture supported by positive relationships with key professionals, such as the local police.
- Staff morale is good and is supported by regular and effective supervision and a varied, engaging training package.
- Excellent case recordings inform robust and detailed risk assessments, which protect young people.
- Young people learn new independence skills, such as budgeting. Some young people hold part-time jobs, offering constructive activity and increased self-worth.
- Young people engage well in education with close, attentive staff support.
- A settled and cohesive management team display a clear and ambitious service improvement plan.
- Independent return to care interviews are not occurring regularly. Information exchange is not effective with professionals when these occur, placing young people at possible future risk.
- The staff team has undergone considerable upheaval. Despite a recent programme of permanent recruitment, the level of agency use was excessive in June 2016.

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 recommendations:

- Ensure that no more than half of the staff on duty at any one time, by day or night at the home should be from an external agency. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.17)
- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

Full report

Information about this children's home

A charity and provider of social housing operates and manages this children's home. Registration permits for the care and accommodation of no more than eight children and young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The age range is from 12 to 17 years old, with two of the eight bedrooms used for emergency placements.

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 18/01/2016 | Interim | Sustained effectiveness |
| 15/09/2015 | Full | Good |
| 19/03/2015 | Interim | Declined in effectiveness |
| 29/01/2015 | Full | Good |

Inspection judgements

| | Judgement grade |
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| The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are | Good |
| <p>Young people say that they are very happy in their home. One comments, 'I love my key worker, they really look after me.' Young people visibly grow in confidence and stature. They say that they feel valued and appreciated and respect the openness and honesty of staff. Young people recently enjoyed a successful holiday to the south of France. For many, this was their first holiday abroad and a good source of bonding with the staff team.</p> <p>Behavioural expectation is clear. Young people understand their care plans and engage in the aims and objectives of them. Key work is regular and tailored to meet the specific needs of young people. Staff make good use of private communication books with young people to commend them on positive behaviour or to explore negative incidents. These recordings offer a key insight into the hard work and genuine affection shown by staff. The recordings support the exploration of sensitive information in private and are good mementos of the work achieved in the home.</p> <p>Feedback from professionals remains very positive. They comment on the positive caring ethos of the home. One comments, 'Thank you for your support and guidance, which has been invaluable.'</p> <p>Educational achievement is celebrated. Young people achieved good grades in recent GCSE examinations. Staff recently supported one young person to return to mainstream provision after two years of absence from school. Young people have transitioned well to specialist courses with a high level of choice and advice. This promotes a positive culture within the home. Staff maintain regular communication with schools, monitoring attendance and attainment. Staff take strong action when education is not meeting the needs of individual young people. This includes appropriately challenging placing authorities to put in place suitable programmes of education.</p> <p>There is an aspirational culture in the home. Staff review behavioural goals and daily planners each week and reward completion with small financial incentives. Young people are extremely motivated to earn extra privileges. A mutual respect between staff and young people is clear.</p> <p>Young people work hard to develop independence skills. Staff make good use of a structured and engaging work programme, which offers clear guidance. Young people learn to earn and manage their own money. Access to paid employment during the school holidays acts as a source of self-confidence and pride to young</p> | |

people. Young people take obvious pleasure in expanding their cookery skills and on occasion preparing and cooking meals for their peers.

Staff prioritise the value of healthy eating, regular exercise and maintaining good personal hygiene. Medication is safely distributed and importance is given to regular compliance. Young people access a number of sports, including boxing and martial arts to keep fit. Staff support young people to consult with medical professionals and relevant support groups. This helps to develop an understanding of their histories, access relevant support and develop confidence.

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| | Judgement grade |
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | Good |
| <p>Young people access good levels of independent advocacy and that, they say, empowers them. This supports good outcomes for young people. Intervention from an advocate recently secured an extension to the placement and a more effective planned move on to foster care for one young person. The extra time proved to be of great benefit. They are now progressing well.</p> <p>Consultation is consistent and obtained inventively. Residents' meetings occur regularly. Young people recently attended a team meeting to negotiate for later bedtime routines. In addition, two young people sat on an interview panel for new staff and their observations were integral to the decision of employment. This supports a culture of community and shared ownership within the home.</p> <p>Staff are thoughtful and reflective. Training on key issues, such as the risk of child sexual exploitation, promotes awareness of key risk indicators. Staff engage well with specialist input from child and adolescent mental health service professionals and implement their recommendations to support the care of young people.</p> <p>Key times and areas of vulnerability remain addressed effectively. Staff have access to a box of night-time activities, which supports young people who find it hard to settle. When young people struggle, staff act swiftly to advocate for specialist services and assessments. This ensures a timely allocation of services and improved outcomes for young people.</p> <p>Staff support a strong safeguarding culture and persistently 'go the extra mile'. Recently, staff challenged a taxi driver who was picking up a young person from the home without the appropriate consent. Good use of the home's CCTV system and liaison with police identified the dangerous criminal history of an associate of one young person. Subsequent protective action helped keep young people safe. When allegations or disclosures occur, these remain handled sensitively and via the</p> | |

correct procedure. Professionals comment on the excellent levels of communication and prompt responses from staff. This supports safe care for young people.

Young people work to reduce risk-taking behaviours, such as absconding from the home. Key work sessions explore reasons and factors behind incidents, and staff explore the possibility of overnight contact with friends and family. This allows young people to feel represented and creates a sense of trust and belonging with staff. Despite good levels of support, independent return to care interviews are not occurring regularly. When these do take place, communication with key professionals does not occur, possibly placing young people at risk.

Staff liaise well with families and friends. One parent comments, 'They are doing a really good job, they stay in touch and really reassure me.' Positive relationships give consistency in behavioural management and assist in locating young people when they go missing. The home supervises and manages contact with family and friends. Recently, feedback from staff supported one young person to enjoy regular unsupervised contact with a relative. This has been a source of great pride to them and reassurance to his close family.

Individual placement plans, behavioural plans, risk assessments and health plans are of good quality. These are based on observations from the professional network and rigorous case recording. Staff understand young people and their behavioural patterns and learn to intervene effectively when they are struggling. Staff supervision in the community is reduced, dependent on assessed need. This helps to reduce incidents of restraint and sanctioning. When these occur, young people are offered a full debrief with managers, and strategies for avoiding a repetition are explored.

| | Judgement grade |
|--|-----------------|
| The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers | Good |
| <p>The home benefits from a stable, experienced and committed management team. The registered manager has been in post for one year and is qualified to level 4. She has nearly 15 years of experience in residential care. Her deputy is presently completing her level 5 qualification and is due to complete this in May 2017. They remain supported by the consistent challenge and scrutiny of an effective independent visitor. Managers engage consistently with young people and enjoy a high level of mutual respect.</p> <p>A recruitment programme has reduced the use of agency staff and offered more consistency for young people. However, there have been occasions in recent months when the level of agency staffing on shift has exceeded 50%. Wherever</p> | |

possible, the same members of agency staff are used, which helps to limit changes to the adult group who care for young people. Recruitment remains conducted safely. On commencing, staff benefit from a rigorous probationary period and a positive supervision and appraisal programme.

Despite the recent large staff turnover, morale within the team remains high. The team offers a number of unique skills. One member of staff recently achieved promotion within the home. Staff understand the statement of purpose and remain invested in the development of the home. They remain excited by the use of new social work theories in the home, such as 'attachment style interviewing'. Staff report a climate of openness and transparency. Managers act on their concerns promptly. Staff value the weekly team meeting as a forum for monitoring the care of young people.

Managers are inventive and proactive. They are continually seeking to develop and improve the home. A group of volunteers from a major multinational company recently supported staff to improve the garden area.

Training is regular and relevant to the needs of young people. Managers promote a learning culture by offering guidance on social work theories, such as 'attachment styles'. This allows staff to develop and reflect on young people's behaviour and to respond more effectively.

Case files illustrate the effective and consistent audits completed by managers. Risk assessments remain reviewed regularly and offer clear guidance for staff, regarding key trigger behaviours and coping mechanisms. This supports good levels of care to young people presenting with high levels of need.

Managers control admissions well. Established procedures offer effective screening and offer good matching to the needs of young people already resident in the home. When admissions do not progress as planned, managers reflect well and review procedures accordingly. They report good levels of support from senior managers within the organisation. This helps to improve outcomes for young people.

Managers ensure that the home is in a good state of repair, with all of the necessary risk assessments and checks undertaken in respect of the building.

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 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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