

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	27/09/2016
Unique reference number	SC439535
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Pebbles Care Limited
Registered provider address	Rouse House, 2 Wyther Lane, Kirkstall, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS5 3BT

Responsible individual	Amanda Quinn
Registered manager	Kimberley Crabtree
Inspector	Michele Hargan

Inspection date	27/09/2016
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

SC439535

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Staff are good at making relationships with young people.
- Young people are admitted to the home following careful assessment.
- Most young people make good progress in their education in comparison to when they were first admitted to the home.
- Young people receive effective help with further education and training.
- Young people make good progress with their social and emotional development.
- Young people take part in a meaningful and varied range of in-house and community-based activities.
- Young people's missing behaviour and substance misuse significantly reduce.
- Young people receive effective support by being able to access independent advocates.
- Staff feel well supported and valued by managers and senior staff.
- The manager demonstrates a genuine commitment to continuous improvement for the benefit of 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 recommendations:

- The registered person should provide opportunities and support, when needed, for children to engage with their local Children in Care Council, or other such local arrangements, which enable the views and experiences of children in care to be heard. In particular, encourage and provide the necessary practical assistance so that young people can take part in this forum. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 4.15)
- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. When there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps that the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. In particular, ensure that placing authority social workers routinely sign up to risk assessments. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The home's policies and procedures in relation to the protection of children should reflect any requirements of other relevant legislation. In particular, ensure that a robust system is in place for all policies and procedures that demonstrates the date, version number and author, and make clear that current statutory regulations and guidance are included. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The home should prepare and implement a behaviour management policy. This policy should describe the home's approach to promoting positive behaviour and the measures of control, discipline and restraint that may be used in the home. These measures should be set in the context of building positive relationships with children. In particular, ensure that the duration of any disciplinary measures is recorded. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.33)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan, which can fulfil the workforce-related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should
 - detail the necessary management and staffing structure (including any staff commissioned to provide health and education), the experience and qualifications of staff currently working within the staffing structure, and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the home's statement of purpose;
 - detail the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve

- induction, probation and any core training (such as safeguarding, health and safety and mandatory qualifications);
- detail the process for managing and improving poor performance;
 - detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person is responsible for ensuring that all staff consistently follow the home's policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home's care. Everyone working at the home must understand their roles, responsibilities and what they are authorised to decide on their own initiative. There should be clear lines of accountability. In particular, ensure that minutes from staff meetings identify who is responsible and by when for any arising actions and, when necessary, direct staff to any related policies or procedural guidance. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)
 - The registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguard children and minimise potential risks to them. In particular, ensure that the registered manager verifies references on prospective employees. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home can accommodate up to five young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
15/12/2015	Full	Good
10/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/10/2014	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 individual progress measured against their needs when they live at the home. This is because staff adopt an individualised approach to helping young people. This results in majorly improved self-care, social skills and school attendance. This aids young people’s overall development and builds their confidence.</p> <p>The majority of young people go to school or are in further training and are doing well. Staff promote good attendance at school or training, helping to prepare young people for independent living by embedding these routines. When a young person’s school attendance declines, staff take effective action. As a result, agreement is reached with other professionals to consider how best to address issues of concern. A teacher said, ‘The home are fantastic. They have done everything they can to incentivise the young person to go to school.’</p> <p>Relationships between young people and staff are good and it is evident how much staff invest in improving the life chances and outcomes of all those who live at the home. At inspection, the manager and staff focused on listening and asking young people about matters that are important to them. This demonstrated that young people have meaningful opportunities to express their views and to feel understood. This helps young people to feel more secure and trusting of staff. All young people spoke highly of staff and a young person said, ‘The manager and deputy are the best in the whole company. You can tell them anything.’</p> <p>Young people take part in a range of activities and pastimes that meet their needs and reflect their separate interests, for example going to the climbing wall, go-karting, ice-skating, trampolining, cooking and day trips. Young people interested in paramedical training have completed accredited training in first aid.</p> <p>Staff used the home’s large garden to host a sports day for about 17 young people who are looked after by this provider. Such events give young people a meaningful experience of what it feels like to be in a safe community setting, collectively taking part in a fun activity. This also helps young people to learn about cooperation and build positive childhood memories. A member of staff said, ‘We had bunting up. I had to use a loud speaker. It couldn’t have gone any better. We had point systems for first, second and third place. All the activities were team events.’</p> <p>Young people’s needs are carefully assessed prior to their admission, in order to establish their suitability. Matching young people’s needs in this way promotes placement stability and means that staff are able to meet young people’s needs well. A young person said, ‘The best thing about the home is my key-worker</p>	

sessions.'

Similarly, staff provide young people with the right kind of help when they leave the home, and they stay in touch with them afterwards. For instance, a member of staff said, 'The young person has stayed in contact and has been over for Sunday lunch. He is still doing the catering course at college and he is doing OK. He knows he can ring us and that he can come here for Christmas lunch.'

Staff respect young people's relationships with their families. They provide young people with the necessary support to ensure that they are able to see or speak to their family members and other important people regularly when it is in their best interests. This aids young people's sense of identity, by meeting their development needs. Staff take effective action to address any concerns that occur as a result of young people seeing their families. This promotes the safety and well-being of young people.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>Young people's safety and well-being are improved. The frequency with which young people go absent or missing reduces significantly. Some young people are no longer at risk of this at all. Young people are not sexually exploited, and the risk of this occurring is low. Proactive steps by staff discourage young people from spending time in places that increase their vulnerabilities. As a result, most young people are learning to make safer choices.</p> <p>Outcomes relating to substance misuse are mixed, with some young people making a significant reduction in their drug use, while others struggle to acknowledge why their behaviour warrants any concern. Staff recognise the factors underlying this behaviour and they make concerted efforts aimed at disrupting young people's access to others who put them at risk. These include making sure that young people have input from drug and alcohol prevention agencies and seeking advice and guidance from specialist workers when necessary. A substance prevention worker said, 'Staff use different approaches, depending on young people's needs. They contact me if they are worried and I help them manage any risks.'</p> <p>Regular visits by the police benefit young people and staff. As a result, young people have increased understanding about the responsibilities of the police, and this reinforces what staff do to keep young people safe. A police officer spoke about the reduction in young people's risk-taking behaviours and said, 'There has</p>	

been a dramatic improvement. 'Staff are very good. They pass on any concerns.'

Young people's risk assessments are not routinely agreed or signed by their social workers. This reduces joint ownership and shared accountability for ensuring that any safety measures implemented undergo effective review.

The registered manager is not the person responsible for verifying references regarding prospective staff. This is a missed opportunity for ensuring that the person responsible for decision-making about the suitability of staff can obtain any additional information about prospective candidate's fitness, for example, when referees provide only scant information. In all other respects, recruitment practices are sound.

Young people live in a home that feels relaxed and welcoming. A concerted effort to sustain good physical standards in the home results in young people living in a setting that is clean, homely, well maintained and furnished to a good standard. This helps young people to feel valued and encourages future aspirations.

Staff do not routinely use disciplinary measures in response to young people's behaviour because they recognise the shortcomings of this approach. Therefore, the sanctions used are relatively few, and there is a move away from using any punitive responses at all. Reflecting on how staff had helped them, a young person said, 'I damaged some property and they didn't get the police.'

Records of sanctions do not make clear how long any imposed financial penalties imposed last. Such omission in recorded information can cause misunderstanding by young people or staff, now or in the future.

Staff are clear with young people at the point of admission that they will only use physical intervention as a last resort, to keep them and others safe. There have been no restraints since the last inspection. Staff speak to young people about any underlying issues that may affect their behaviour. This reduces the likelihood that young people need to test boundaries with staff.

Staff sometimes search young people's rooms when they are concerned that they are placing themselves at risk. In most instances, young people are present and are informed about the reasons why this measure is necessary. This transparent approach respects young people's rights, while promoting their welfare.

The manager's guidance makes clear to staff the most important aspects of how to approach their responsibilities of caring for young people. This results in staff being clear about how to maintain professional relationships with young people at all times. Young people receive information about ways in which staff can support them. This document conveys an empathic understanding about what could cause young people distress and reassures them that they will be helped, whatever their concerns.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>The registered manager has been in post since 2013 and is suitably experienced. She will complete the necessary leadership qualifications within the next month. She is highly dedicated and committed to improving young people’s lives. For example, a concerted effort to establish a cohesive team approach and embed a nurturing culture is now apparent. A young person speaking about staff said, ‘They are there for you and they listen to you.’</p> <p>An improved induction format and supervision pro forma have resulted in new and established staff receiving more focused support. These developments reflect an increased focus by managers and leaders on ensuring that staff deliver care practice that links to meaningful outcomes for young people. A member of staff said, ‘The induction has been good. We go through some scenarios, like what we would do if a young person goes missing.’</p> <p>The home is a fully staffed home, with a permanent and stable staff team that works well together. This is underpinned by a sound induction, regular management oversight and supervision, resulting in staff who feel well supported and able to meet young people’s needs. This enables staff to genuinely invest in their relationships with young people. A member of staff said, ‘We are all working together. We are a lot more productive. We all share our views. It’s a lot better for the young people. [It] feels like everything is running a lot smoother. We have a solid management team.’</p> <p>Staff work effectively with other professionals and parents, informing them, as appropriate, about young people’s needs and progress. Thus, all those involved understand young people’s needs, experiences and progress, promoting consistency and good relationships. Any concerns affecting the young people are shared with an advocate who works on behalf of the young people. The outcome of this is that the young people’s concerns are responded to, helping to resolve any issues. In addition, representatives from the home meet with the placing authority to ensure that the best interests of young people are at the forefront of any decisions about their care. A social worker said, ‘There is good communication. I get a weekly log.’</p> <p>Routine handovers take place at the beginning and end of each shift. This allows staff to reflect on young people’s experiences and pass on details of young people’s days. In this way, staff have an up-to-date understanding and a consistent approach to caring for young people. It also ensures that they receive the necessary support.</p> <p>Young people’s case records are well organised, up to date and contain relevant</p>	

information in an accessible format. When necessary, young people's placement plans are compiled in a pictorial format, reflecting young people's level of understanding. This enables young people to understand what their needs are and what staff do to help them.

Training for staff is well organised, and systems are in place to monitor completion and to identify when staff need to refresh mandatory training. This ensures that staff stay informed about up-to-date practices and are accountable for delivering good care.

The system for effectively updating and reviewing the home's policies and procedures is not robust. For example, procedural guidance about safeguarding does not reflect current statutory guidance. It is also unclear when missing-from-home procedures were written, by whom and whether these documents are tamper proof. This undermines the credibility of the procedural guidance available to staff. A plan about the ongoing development of the home's workforce, including what to do to address any concerns about staff who may be struggling, is not in place. This omission can lead to reactive responses in the event of any concerns that could compromise young people's care.

Team meeting minutes do not identify the individual responsibility of staff for carrying out any arising actions. Nor are the timescales for doing so outlined, or the outcome of these matters effectively reviewed. This does not maximise staff's capacity to learn and further develop their care practice.

There is limited opportunity for young people to influence those who commission residential places and assess the quality of care. This means that they are not encouraged to participate in external forums, in which they could share their views and experiences. This is a missed opportunity to include young people's participation to represent their community and to gain increased understanding of their rights as young citizens.

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 whom 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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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