

## Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	02/12/2016
Unique reference number	1226757
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Potton Homes Ltd
Registered provider address	1 Cresswell Park, Blackheath, London SE3 9RD

Responsible individual	Susan Potton
Registered manager	Claire Sowden
Inspector	Joanna Heller

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>02/12/2016</b>
<b>Previous inspection judgement</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>This inspection</b>	
<p><b>The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection</b></p> <p>This home was judged <b>good</b> at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has <b>sustained effectiveness</b>.</p> <p>At the last inspection, four requirements and five recommendations were set. The manager has made improvement in the vast majority of the shortfalls, but some have yet to be fully met. The children are effectively safeguarded. The care and support that they receive are child focused and individualised.</p> <p>Staff vetting procedures, on occasion, fall below the level of good practice. Checks on an applicant's identity and potential criminal history are undertaken. However, the records maintained do not always evidence that two suitable references have been obtained and verified, or that gaps in employment have been effectively identified and scrutinised. These shortfalls mean that information which potentially impacts on suitability may not be identified.</p> <p>At the last inspection, the manager was asked to ensure that all staff undertake training in all relevant key areas. There has been some improvement. For example, all staff have completed training against child sexual exploitation and in first aid. However, some staff still require training in key areas, such as safeguarding, self-harm and food hygiene, in order to ensure that they are fully equipped to support children's diverse needs.</p> <p>All the staff are trained in the safe application of physical restraint and breakaway techniques, which are used only to keep the child or others safe. The manager reviews all incidents to ensure that their application is appropriate and to identify any patterns and trends. The staff develop effective, individualised de-escalation methods for particular children, for example hand massage, and these helpful tips are incorporated into the child's individual management plan.</p> <p>Medication arrangements in the home have improved since the last inspection. There are home remedy protocols in place that enable staff to administer emergency pain relief. However, they require further improvement to comply with good practice. Medication is securely stored in a room which can, in summer, become hot. This has the potential to impact on the efficacy of the medication. On occasion, staff who have yet to have their competence assessed have administered medication. However, the potential risk is reduced as the staff have undertaken</p>	

basic medication training.

Since the last inspection, a night-time drill has taken place. All the children now receive instruction on fire procedures upon admission. The building is generally well maintained. However, there are some specific aspects which require repair. For example, the fire door of one vacant bedroom requires repair, as do the french doors in the lounge and the door to the cabin. Furthermore, loose cabling and a broken first-floor window restrictor present potential health and safety concerns. However, these specific shortfalls do not detract from the warm and homely environment. The children enjoy decorating the house ready for Christmas and planning their forthcoming birthday festivities.

The focus of the home is to provide short-term stability for children and identify and facilitate future care plans. Therefore, placements last from two weeks to two months. The children's individual needs are well met and their outcomes promoted. They are encouraged to be fully involved in their future plans and transitions to new placements. Good placement planning and high staff supervision levels mean that no placement breakdowns have occurred. One social worker described how their child has experienced an 'amazing transformation' due to staff 'providing wraparound support'. They described how a child had moved from being a very high-risk child, going missing several times a day, to one who has barely been out of the sight of the staff. One child reflected on their progress and how the staff have helped them mature and be safer, as a result. They said: 'This place is so nice, it's really lovely. The staff are lovely, and it has helped me to make changes. I used to be so naughty – go missing, doing drugs and stuff – but now I don't do any of it.'

The children develop really positive relationships with the staff, particularly given the short time that they stay at the home. One social worker said, 'She was very choked up when she left.' The children feel nurtured, safe and secure. One said: 'Staff are lovely, bubbly, caring, and really listen to me and try to understand me. They're there to comfort you, give you a hug, and give you everything you need.'

During their stay, the children are supported educationally by the staff from the organisation's school. The majority begin to improve their engagement and attendance in education from their starting point. For example, one child described how their stay had been a turning point, re-engaging them in education after four years of disaffection and introducing them to the idea that learning is a joy. Staff are committed to making each child's stay fun, giving them memorable moments to treasure. They are always on the go, doing plenty of activities such as trips to theme and amusement parks, the cinema and ice-cream parlours, and quieter activities such as walks or shopping.

Quality monitoring arrangements in the home have improved. Feedback from children and partner agencies is effectively sought. As a result, the manager has a greater insight into the areas for development. The standard of file management and case recording has improved. The children's case files contain the required

information and consents. This means that records are now sufficiently accurate and reliable to demonstrate the actions which staff take to support individual children, both on a day-to-day basis and in respect of specific incidents. The children's individual risk assessments are detailed. They guide the staff effectively on the child's needs and the actions to be taken to protect them better. Staff, in practice, provide a robust response to any incidents of missing from care or concerns around potential child sexual exploitation. The local police 'missing from care liaison officer described the service as 'absolutely responsive'.

The home's location risk assessment does not review the potential strengths and concerns of local community relationships and the potential impact upon children's well-being. The assessment contains details of the railway station and crossing. However, the children's individual risk assessments do not robustly link to it. For example, while it is referred to in the children's missing from care risk assessments, the initial global assessment of risk developed at the time of placement does not examine the potential risks of a specific child in relation to their personal history. This means that potential risk may not be effectively identified and suitable management plans established. The impact is reduced, due to the high levels of supervision and the positive relationships established with the local train station and transport police, which have, in practice, ensured that any risky situations have been well managed.

While a number of requirements and recommendations have either been set at this inspection or remain from the previous inspection, this has not had a significant impact on the outcomes and experiences of the children. The home continues to make a positive difference. For example, one social worker described how, for one child, within the short placement time the staff have been able to identify 'not just what their needs are, but exactly how to support them'. One child summed up their experience as: 'I wouldn't change a thing. The best thing about it is everyone who is here. This place is life-changing, for good.'

## Information about this children's home

The home is one of three children's homes and a school that are privately owned by this company. It is registered to look after a maximum of three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities. This is a task-focused unit whose purpose is to assess the needs of the young people and identify what types of long-term placement and support services that are required.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/07/2016	Full	Good

## 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>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 full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in schedule 2. (Regulation 32(3)(c)(d))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that suitable references are obtained and verified, and identify and explore gaps in employment.</p>	28/01/2017
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees undertake appropriate continuing professional development. (Regulation 33(4)(a))</p> <p>In particular, they must ensure that all staff undertake suitable training in safeguarding, food hygiene, countering self-harm and any other training that reflects the needs of the children placed.</p>	02/01/2017
<p>12: The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to health and safety, the registered person must ensure that:</p> <p>(2)(d) the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12(2)(d))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that all fire doors are maintained to make sure that their integrity is not compromised, that all windows above the ground floor to which children have access have suitable working window restrictors and that all cables are well secured. Furthermore, ensure that doors exiting the lounge and accessing the garden cabin both open and close effectively.</p>	02/01/2017

## Recommendations

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

- Make suitable arrangements to manage, administer and dispose of any medication. These are fundamentally the same sorts of arrangements as a good parent would make, but are subject to additional safeguards. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)

In particular, staff should ensure that medication is stored at a suitable temperature and that staff administer medication only when their competency to do so has been assessed.

- 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 the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

In particular, staff should ensure that individual risk assessments for each child are sufficiently clear on the risk and actions to be taken to reduce risk, specifically in relation to the railway line.

- When establishing the home, the registered person must ensure that it is suitably located so that children are effectively safeguarded and can access services to meet needs identified in their relevant plans (see regulations 12(2)(c)). Under regulation 46, the registered person should review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

In particular, review the potential strengths and impact upon children of local community relationships.

## **What the inspection judgements mean**

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

## **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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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