

Children's homes inspection – Full

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| Inspection date | 23/11/2016 |
| Unique reference number | SC007284 |
| Type of inspection | Full |
| Provision subtype | Children's home |
| Registered provider | Horizon Residential Children's Home |
| Registered provider address | 46 The Ridgeway, North Harrow, Harrow, Middlesex HA2 7QN |

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| Responsible individual | Mehnaaz Chaudhary |
| Registered manager | St Claire Simmons Muhammad |
| Inspector | Christine Kennet |

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| Inspection date | 23/11/2016 |
| Previous inspection judgement | Improved effectiveness |
| Enforcement action since last inspection | None |
| This inspection | |
| The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are | Outstanding |
| 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. | |
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | Good |
| The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers | Outstanding |

SC007284

Summary of findings

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

- Leaders and managers make excellent assessments of young people prior to admission to the home to ensure that they do not affect young people already living in the home.
- Staff manage transitions sensitively for young people, even when placements need to end.
- Professionals and parents all report that young people make excellent progress from their starting points while living in this home.
- Young people receive encouragement and enthusiasm to live healthy lifestyles, maintain and understand their identity and learn skills for the future. Young people feel respected and that staff care about them.
- Young people receive excellent opportunities while living in this home. A highly professional staff team works hard to enable young people to take opportunities and improve their life chances.
- Staff love their jobs and form trusting and strong relationships with young people. This enables staff to consistently set and maintain boundaries.
- The staff team is well qualified, stable and consistent. Managers and staff are highly skilled and experienced, and use research to inform their practice. They work consistently well together and show great commitment, making young people feel valued.
- Strong leaders and managers ensure that the staff have the necessary tools to continue to do an outstanding job with young people in this home.
- This inspection found two minor shortfalls in respect of notifications and the independent visitor's reports. Neither of these had an impact on the excellent quality of care that the young people receive.

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 any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person provides a copy of the independent person's report to HMCI in a timely way. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)
- Ensure that the registered person notifies Ofsted and other relevant persons if one of the situations specified in regulation 40 (4)(a)-(d) occurs, or if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious (regulation 40 (4)(e)). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately run home accommodates six young people. The home offers care to young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 23/03/2016 | Interim | Improved effectiveness |
| 08/12/2015 | Full | Outstanding |
| 18/03/2015 | Interim | Improved effectiveness |
| 23/10/2014 | Full | Outstanding |

Inspection judgements

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| | Judgement grade |
| <p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p> | <p>Outstanding</p> |
| <p>Managers and staff continue to offer outstanding care to young people. The staff team works hard with young people, who have exceptionally complex needs and who present extreme challenges at times, and helps them to make progress.</p> <p>A great strength of this home is the time and care that staff give to matching the compatibility of new referrals with existing residents. Ensuring the correct mix of young people in the home helps them to settle and make progress. One commissioning officer said, 'I often get a "no" from this placement, they consider matching well.' On the occasions when matching is not effective, managers and staff recognise this quickly and ensure plans for smooth transitions.</p> <p>There have been a number of transitions since the last inspection. Reviews of these placements showed well-managed, agreed short-term placements or situations beyond the home's control, such as custody. When notice is given on placements, excellent dialogue takes place with placing authorities to ensure planned moves. One social worker said, 'One young person presented very unsafe behaviours, they managed to work with him and move him to a more appropriate placement.'</p> <p>Parents and professionals report that young people make excellent progress while living in this home. The needs of young people with highly complex needs are well managed, so that they make considerable progress from their starting points. For example, one young person regularly attends college, following a long period of non-attendance in education prior to moving here. Another young person has found stability living in the home for over a year, after having 12 previous placements.</p> <p>All young people attend school, college, employment or training. An educational coordinator is employed by the home to 'champion' young people's educational needs. This role ensures excellent liaison with education facilities, formulation and coordination of education plans and advocacy to ensure inclusion. During this inspection, several young people were enabled to attend open evenings with the support of this worker and the staff team. One education worker stated that since moving into the home, a young person's reading has 'improved immensely', due to good routines and encouraging positive attitudes to learning.</p> <p>All young people are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and take regular exercise. Young people receive excellent attention to their cultural identity and dietary needs. For example, one young person eats halal meat and there is a separate fridge to cater for this need. Menus in the home include young people's choices</p> | |

and a wide range of culturally diverse dishes, which suit the origins of the young people. One ex-resident visited the home during the inspection. She told inspectors how healthy eating habits and lifestyle choices in the home had helped her to lose weight and maintain her health. One parent said, 'They encourage (my child) to do prayers and eat a correct diet.'

Staff engage young people in life-story work throughout their time at this home. Some excellent records of pieces of work undertaken and photographic memories collated in life-story books help young people understand their identity and keep a record of their time in the home.

Staff offer young people opportunities to engage in group activities, one-to-one activity time with key workers and to go on holidays. These pursuits help young people to build positive self-esteem and feel a sense of self-worth. For example, one young person told us how he had received a birthday cake and had the, 'best birthday ever'.

Staff recognise the importance of improving and sustaining relationships with young people's families. They regularly undertake family work to achieve better relationships, they help parents to learn different strategies to manage behaviour and to feel more confident in their parenting role. Key workers advocate on behalf of young people to ensure that they have a good amount of contact with their families, if it is safe to do so.

Positive relationship building is a major strength of the practice in this home. Staff love their jobs and relationships between them and young people are strong. This allows progress and feelings of trust and security. Young people say that they feel listened to and this gives them confidence that staff care for them and want to help them. Staff have high expectations for young people and provide great encouragement and support to strive to be their best.

Staff model excellent behaviours and routines, which support young people to get into a different mind-set about what they are doing with their time and what they hope to achieve. For example, one young person who was previously awake all night and disengaged from education, has had help to change his sleeping habits and routines. He is now engaging in education and making progress in other areas, such as attending youth offending appointments and keeping out of trouble with the police.

Staff consult with young people regularly about their care and the risks they worry about for them. This consultation and inclusion encourages young people to think about their actions. With support, they contribute to their plans and think about risky behaviours. This helps young people to learn how to keep themselves safe.

Young people receive excellent support via their key workers and the staff team in the home. Many staff have worked here for a number of years and this allows

consistent and trusting relationships to build up. Young people receive regular one-to-one sessions where they look at a range of issues where support and help is needed. In addition, there are regular residents' meetings, which are well attended and which are a forum for young people to raise issues, make requests and assert choices. Minutes of these meetings show that staff listen to and act on requests and suggestions made by young people about their home.

Young people access an independent living programme, which helps them to learn to look after themselves, for example by cooking simple meals, budgeting and doing their own laundry. Young people are encouraged to engage with the wider community through various routes, such as helping at the food bank, attending local events and meeting various professionals who come to talk to them in the home. The education coordinator supports this process by helping young people collate information into an achievement folder, which includes their curriculum vitae, details of voluntary and paid work, and a statement about the young person's hopes and plans for the future. This folder helps young people to prepare for the world of work and independence.

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| | Judgement grade |
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | Good |
| <p>Leaders, managers, and the staff team identify risks for young people with complex needs and the impact this may have on existing residents. They work hard to keep young people safe when they may present any risk to each other. This process of risk assessment begins for each young person prior to his or her admission to the home. Risk assessment and evaluation continue throughout their placement, with regular updates.</p> <p>When young people go missing from care, appropriate protocols, including use of an excellent child sexual exploitation tool, are used. If young people present a high risk, staff update assessments regularly. Appropriate referrals to placing authorities ensure that professionals' meetings or strategy meetings consider a multi-agency approach to safeguarding. Staff make regular attempts to contact young people when they are missing, including regular telephone calls and visits to known addresses or schools in an attempt to locate them. There have been a number of absences involving a few young people since the last inspection. Many absences tend to be young people returning late to the home. However, staff and managers apply clear processes, and emphasise to young people their vulnerability if staff do not know their whereabouts. Missing incidents have reduced with changes in the group of young people placed in the home. Staff request placing authorities to offer independent interviews when young people return. However, these do not always</p> | |

take place, despite good challenge from the home.

In almost all cases, staff make appropriate notifications regarding significant incidents. However, one incident reviewed on inspection had not been notified to the regulator. All processes and policies in relation to the incident had been followed and no young people were placed at risk as a result.

Incident and restraint recording is excellent, timely and exceeds regulations. This all helps to ensure that young people are kept as safe as possible and that known risks can be shared and updated regularly.

Young people generally feel safe. A review of files and incident reports showed that staff work hard to keep young people as safe as possible. One commissioner said, 'They keep young people safe by teaching young people to keep themselves safe.'

Young people know how to complain. Complaints reviewed had been responded to promptly and within the written complaints procedures. Young people have a 'grumbles' book and are encouraged to raise issues at the residents' meeting, providing a forum to share and resolve issues prior to making complaints. When a complaint is received, young people's comments about how this is resolved are clearly recorded, with dates and signatures.

Managers ensure that there is safe recruitment practice when employing new staff or volunteers. This helps to prevent and deter unsafe adults from gaining access to work at the home or having unsupervised contact with young people. Young people are involved in the recruitment process and give their views to leaders and managers about prospective employees.

Young people receive appropriate advice about their sexual health, the cessation of smoking and the impact of misusing alcohol or illegal substances. Individuals from the community with specialist knowledge in these areas come to the home, meet young people and share information at residents' meetings.

Adequate precautions reduce the risk of fires. Safety equipment is in place and there is evidence of regular and compliant checks and fire drills. The registered manager completes a risk assessment of the home, and regular checks ensure that young people are safe when in the home. In addition, the registered manager completes a risk assessment of the local area to establish local risks. This local knowledge is gained in collaboration with local services and providers and gives the home invaluable insight into the risks present for young people in the community.

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| | Judgement grade |
| The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers | Outstanding |
| <p>Leaders and managers in this service are outstanding. They have worked together as a team for many years and have established an excellent service for young people. They inspire the staff team to strive for the best for the young people they care for, and support continued learning and professional development.</p> <p>The registered manager is a qualified social worker who is suitably experienced, enrolled on the level 5 diploma in leadership and management and aware of the timeframe within which this needs to be completed. Staff reflect the diversity of young people and many have worked at the home long-term. Most staff have level 3 qualifications. Those who do not, gain places on courses during their first year of employment. Three of the senior staff team employed are currently enrolled on the level 5 diploma.</p> <p>Matching processes and impact risk assessments provide excellent tools to enable the needs of existing young people to be met. Staff retain referral information, including responses and decisions. Managers have turned down a large number of possible placements since the last inspection, on the basis that they would not be a suitable match.</p> <p>Leaders and managers respond well to planned endings when young people have complex needs. If placements are not effective or are overly disruptive to other residents, the managers open an early dialogue with placing authorities to plan effective transitions if possible.</p> <p>Leaders and managers show that they can act on recommendations to improve practice. All feedback is used to improve and develop the home. The registered manager's quality of care review is comprehensive and feeds into an annual review of the workforce development plan. The leaders and managers have a good vision for this service, which includes greater child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) involvement within the home, better integration into the local community and development of the education coordinator role.</p> <p>Leaders and managers ensure that all key documents and policies receive regular updates to remain compliant with regulations. They take account of key changes in legislation and research thinking in social work practice. Leaders and managers facilitate staff to continuously improve and update their knowledge. The staff team meeting is a forum for growth and information sharing. Key areas of research and practice are allocated to team members, who then present their findings in team meetings to the whole team. During the inspection, a team member did a presentation about transgender young people and the team discussed this.</p> | |

There is an excellent training programme for staff, which goes beyond mandatory requirements. For example, all seniors are on the level 5 diploma. All staff receive regular update training on safeguarding and restraint/managing challenging behaviour. In addition, this year staff received training in gang association, risk of radicalisation and the risk of child sexual exploitation. Staff say that they feel the training provided is relevant and helps them to feel more confident about doing their jobs.

An independent visitor regularly monitors what goes on in the home and reports directly to Ofsted. Some of these reports have not been received by the regulator, although were available at inspection. The reports challenge leaders and managers to improve services. The reports do not always contain sufficient detail about young people's safety and protection and are not submitted to the regulator in a timely manner.

Staff excel at working with other agencies, professionals and family members. This is a key to the ongoing success of the service. The whole ethos is inclusive, which secures cooperation to meet young people's needs. For example, there are regular visits from the looked after children nurse, community police and drug workers. Managers are expanding this to include CAMHS and have invited the police lead for missing young people to visit. The vision of the manager and staff is to have 'a team around the home', to support and work together to meet each individual young person's needs. A commissioner said, 'The home expects social workers to buy into an approach which is inclusive, not to just place the young person and not be involved, but to think about which agencies does this young person need and bring those professionals to the planning meeting.'

The experienced staff team works consistently well together and feels supported by managers to undertake confidently the work they do with young people. Leaders and managers work closely with the staff team and their presence is felt within the home. Young people know the leaders and managers well and feel they can approach them. Similarly, leaders and managers know the young people well and can offer excellent support to the staff team in their management of difficult issues or challenges.

Regular team meetings and supervision sessions support the work with young people. Staff receive an annual appraisal, which reviews their development and addresses any areas of concern in practice.

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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