

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	22/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC408714
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Able Health Care Limited
Registered provider address	45 Wolsey Road, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2ER

Responsible individual	Aruna Kukadia
Registered manager	Thomas Thurlow
Inspector	Joanna Heller

Inspection date	22/11/2016
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	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

SC408714

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The children are happy and settled in a nurturing home. They experience stability, develop relationships and make positive changes to their lives.
- The children experience care from committed and supportive staff who have a good knowledge of the therapeutic 'secure base' ethos of the home. The staff have particular regard for the children's past experiences and their presenting behaviours.
- The vast majority of the children make strong progress in relation to their personal safety, personal care, behaviour and social skills. They said that the support given to them by the staff helps them to change and mature.
- The caring staff provide nurturing, individualised, child-focused care. This helps the children to feel loved, safe and secure. The children establish strong relationships with the staff, which they value highly. As a result, they feel able to open up about any worries or concerns that they may have.
- The provision of consistent boundaries within a therapeutic ethos enables the staff to successfully affect behavioural change.
- Risk management is robust, and the close partnership working with other agencies promotes positive outcomes. Families and partner professionals have absolute confidence in the staff to keep the children safe.
- This inspection identifies some minor areas for improvement. These include ensuring that a current statement of purpose is sent to Ofsted and displayed on the organisation's website, and improving specific aspects of the building. However, these shortfalls do not have an impact on the safety and well-being of the children who continue to enjoy living at the home and receive good care and support.

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) meet(s) 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 keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. If a home has a website, the registered person must ensure that a copy of the statement of purpose is published on that website unless the registered person considers that such publication would prejudice the welfare of children in the home. (Regulation 16(3)(b)(4))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must forward a copy of the revised statement of purpose to Ofsted and publish this on the home’s website.</p>	<p>26/12/2016</p>

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Provide a homely, domestic environment, which complies with relevant health and safety legislations. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.9)

In particular, ensure that, where locks are replaced on fire doors, every gap is filled with fireproof filler, repair damages noted in one child’s bedroom and complete the planned decorative works throughout the hall, stairs and landing areas.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned. It is registered to look after a maximum of six young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are education facilities within the grounds of the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
07/12/2015	Full	Good
18/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
08/05/2014	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>This home makes a real difference to the vast majority of the children accommodated. The staff provide children who have challenging behaviour, some of whom had previously high levels of placement breakdown and instability, with a stable and reliable environment, in which they feel safe and well supported. The children are able to invest in the home and make plans, because they have such confidence in the staff and a real sense of stability. One child summed up their thoughts by saying, 'I want to stay here until I am 18.' Another said, 'I like all the staff, but the manager is the best because he has been looking after us.'</p> <p>One social worker said, 'There is genuine love and affection shown both ways,' and 'He regards them as his family and wants to stay in the area to be near them.' Staff are well trained to implement the 'secure base model', which is effectively embedded into staff practice. The children develop strong bonds with the staff, which help them to improve their confidence and emotional resilience. They feel that the staff care about them and their well-being and know that there is always someone there for them. As a result of these nurturing relationships and the consistent support that staff provide, they are now more able to articulate their troubles and emotions. This helps children to explore their personal experiences and the impact that these are having on them today. One child said, 'It is a brilliant place.'</p> <p>Placements are well planned. Placement breakdowns are rare. When children do move on, every effort is made to ensure that this is a well-planned and a positive experience for them. The majority of the children make good progress in their ability to maintain their safety, behave appropriately and engage in learning. The children receive highly individualised, child-focused care and support. They feel consulted on all aspects of the home and are involved in setting their individual progress targets.</p> <p>The children are in good health and benefit from good support and guidance from the staff. However, some continue to decline preventative health checks, and the staff have been creative in their approach to combat this. For example, one key worker took their key child with them to their own dentist when they had dental treatment, to try to show the importance of these checks. Regular and recorded key-worker sessions help the children to explore both their mental and emotional well-being. Staff are knowledgeable of and proactive at engaging with local partner services to ensure that the children's needs are met. For example, one professional described how they were going to make a referral for drug and alcohol support, but found that staff had already done so.</p>	

All of the children have been very resistant to engaging in formal education, the majority having not attended for a significant period of time prior to placement. They each make progress in relation to their attendance or attainment, but the level of success varies with each child and according to their starting point. The staff maintain good communication with the schools and education establishments, ensuring that education remains high on the agenda. Each child has an individualised education programme in place, and this is linked to the praise and reward systems in the home, promoting attendance. Older children are well supported in accessing alternative programmes which meet their needs, such as the Prince's Trust.

Older children receive support to develop practical life skills, ensuring that they are better prepared for independence. One developed cooking and entrepreneurial skills that were so good that he sold slices of his 'legendary cheesecake' to neighbours for profit. The children can enjoy a range of activities both inside and outside of the home, which appeal to their interests, from walking on the beach and going to the local skate park to enjoying an unlimited cinema pass. Some have been on holiday with the staff.

Strong partnership working and effective contact arrangements enable families, when appropriate, to remain key figures in their child's life. One social worker commented on how staff 'went out of their way' to facilitate and practically support family contact when the child was placed some distance from home.

The building is a spacious detached house with large, individually decorated rooms and generous living space. The building has been subject to regular and significant damage. However, this has been addressed, and a redecoration programme is underway, which has begun to improve the quality of the hallways and landing. One child's bedroom has been subject to damage and requires repair.

One social worker summed up their view of the home, 'I just think they are fabulous. They factor him into everything they do. It is the best for him. They have pulled it out of the bag for him; he is getting high-end support.' Another partner professional said, 'Staff go out of their way to support young people. They make a real difference and help young people to successfully change.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The vast majority of children feel safe and are safe. They develop strong	

relationships with the staff who provide consistently clear boundaries while maintaining a calm and relaxed atmosphere. The staff help children to develop the skills to articulate and express their worries. As a result, most feel more in control and able to talk about their feelings. On the rare occasion when children have not felt emotionally safe, this has been because they are not yet ready to engage in the therapeutic relationship.

Partner professionals said that the children are safer as a result of living at the home and have absolute confidence in the staff to keep them safe. One partner professional said, 'They equipped him to get back closer to his family and have given him the tools to avoid offending.' Another said, 'My colleagues and I hold this home in high esteem. Staff are not scared to confront them [the children] with the hard decisions, which need to be made, and take them through their options. They will do anything to help young people make progress.' The staff work well in partnership with other agencies to reduce children's patterns of offending, going missing and individual risk-taking behaviour. As a result, for most children, incidents are now few and far between. One social worker referred to a 'massive reduction' in going missing and said, 'This home is fabulous, absolutely brilliant. Nobody has been able to manage him [for] the length of time they have.'

Behaviour management strategies are making a positive difference, and systems in place to encourage positive behaviour are effective. As a result, there is little antisocial behaviour in the community. Emergency contact with the police is limited to when alternatives have been fully explored and situations such as serious assaults on staff that cannot be safely managed within the home. The children said that the responses to negative behaviour are fair and they like the ability to earn rewards. One child proudly described how they are saving towards the latest new smartphone, having earned all their possible praise and rewards money over the last five weeks.

The staff are confident and competent in the use of physical intervention and are clear on the threshold for its use. The use of restraint for some children has dramatically reduced and it is now rarely applied. Consistently good-quality recording of incidents provides the manager with the clarity of the effectiveness of support offered to the children.

The regularly reviewed, good-quality risk assessments and management plans guide the staff effectively in how to manage risk to keep the children safe. These, in conjunction with regular psychologist-led case discussion, enable staff to effectively implement the 'secure base' ethos. The staff, consequently, have good awareness of the key issues for children and what may trigger incidents in the home. They are vigilant to potential conflict and act to address and prevent any issues, including bullying, in the home.

Robust vetting procedures ensure that the children are fully safeguarded from unsuitable people gaining employment in the home. Regular visitors, such as maintenance staff, have suitability checks undertaken. The manager ensures that the staff are conversant with their safeguarding responsibilities. As a result, the

staff are alert to any concerns and ensure that potential safeguarding issues are effectively managed with partner agencies in an open and transparent manner.

Good systems are in place to ensure the safety and security of the building. However, the replacement of a lock on the visitors' room has left a small hole, which requires suitable repair to ensure that the fire door's integrity remains. This has little or no impact on the children as the room is rarely used.

The children's views are listened to and, when they raise concerns, these are responded to. There have been no complaints regarding the quality of care. The children are justly proud of the significant progress that they have made and of their individual maturation. One child said, 'I am growing up, and it's because of them [the staff].'

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>The home is well led by an experienced manager who holds relevant professional qualifications and is currently undertaking a suitable level 5 qualification in leadership. The current statement of purpose has not been sent to Ofsted or uploaded to the organisation's website as required by regulation. While easy accessibility of information is important for all interested parties, this does not have any direct or potential impact for children, as they all receive suitable information in the children's guide prior to placement.</p> <p>The manager works closely with the staff team and psychologist. This has brought about a change in ethos in the home over the past two years, successfully implementing a 'secure base' model of care. The staff have prioritised the needs of the children and improved the quality of support provided. As a result, the vast majority of the children thrive. One professional said that the home 'provides very individualised care and has a good understanding of what the children want and how they work. As a result, this is the first time, [the child] is really engaging in any meaningful way.'</p> <p>The staffing levels are flexibly arranged to meet the children's needs. For example, when children have been particularly challenging, the manager has identified core trigger times and placed extra staffing on duty. Staff changes are minimal and provide the children with consistency and stability of relationships. This enables staff to develop a comprehensive knowledge of the children's particular needs and to deliver individualised care.</p>	

The staff work well together as a team and feel well supported through effective induction, training, supervision and team meetings. They are knowledgeable about the ethos of the home and its positive impact on how they work. For example, one reflected on a child's progress as a good demonstration of 'secure base in action'. The manager and the staff develop strong partnerships with the children, families and partner agencies, which together deliver high-quality support. One social worker said, 'There has been amazing partnership. Everybody is working together, and staff are really on the ball.' All rated the home as providing good to excellent support, using terms such as, 'brilliant' and 'amazing'. One said, 'I really cannot think of any negatives.'

The manager confidently advocates for children and consistently prioritises the child's needs. Parents, social workers, police and youth offending workers all comment on the high calibre and caring nature of the staff employed and the positive difference that the home is making. For example, one said, 'He has stability, love and attachment. He sees the care staff as part of his family and gets the support a good family would provide.' Another said, 'Staff bend over backwards to help him; they will do anything they can.'

The manager ensures that the organisational training programme is targeted to reflect the needs of the children. The training effectively promotes staff's professional development, skills and competence. All staff who have worked in a children's home since April 2014 without a significant break in employment have completed the level 3 diploma or equivalent, and new staff are currently undertaking this.

The home is well resourced to ensure that the service meets the aims and objectives and individual needs of the children. The manager has ensured that the one requirement set at the previous inspection has been met. Staff and the manager use reflective practice and try to understand how things can be changed to better support the children. Effective monitoring systems are well utilised to gain a clear sense of the strengths of the service. This two-pronged approach enables the manager to have a clear vision for service development.

This is a well-led home, where the manager's vision and commitment have been effectively shared with all of the staff. This drive has enthused staff to individually and collectively work hard to improve the children's experiences.

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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