

1245565

Registered provider: Esland North Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home, operated by a private provider, is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, and learning disabilities.

Inspection dates: 25 to 26 July 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: First inspection

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Children and young people have made exceptional progress in all areas of their lives. They are healthier, they have started to engage with education, and they are happy and settled.
- Children and young people are significantly safer as a result of living in this home. They have ceased risky behaviours such as going missing from care, substance misuse and offending.
- Children and young people have extremely positive relationships with staff. Their lives are enriched by activities that promote their social skills, self-confidence and self-esteem.
- The voice of the children and young people is strong. It informs care planning and risk assessment, as well as day-to-day living. Staff are very creative in ensuring that they are able to engage the children and young people in discussions about areas that are important to them.
- Staff have a clear and robust understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to keeping children and young people safe from harm. Their response to children and young people who go missing from care is exceptionally effective.
- The manager has demonstrated that she is open, honest and willing to learn from incidents. Her response to allegations is prompt, effective and transparent.
- The manager provides exceptional leadership. Her vision and aspirations for the home provide the staff team with inspiration and motivation to deliver a high standard of care and support. The result is a committed and passionate group of staff who work well together to provide consistency and stability.
- Staff are very well supported. They have regular supervision, appraisals, and access to a wide range of high quality training. This ensures that they are competent to care for and support the children and young people in this home.
- Partnership working is highly effective. The manager is keen to engage with other professionals for the benefit of the children and young people.
- The manager is exceptionally child focused, and places their best interests at the heart of the home's practice. To this end, she is prepared to challenge partners when she is concerned about their practice.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people are making exceptional progress in all areas of their lives as a result of living in this home. One young person said: 'It has changed my life in every way.' Positive relationships, committed and caring staff, effective partnership working, and individualised care and support have contributed to making a real difference to the lives of the children and young people. They have stopped offending, ceased their significant substance misuse, and are emotionally more stable. A stakeholder said of a young person: 'There has been huge progress.' In one instance, a lengthy custodial sentence was avoided as a direct result of the progress made. This will be of huge benefit to the young person's future life chances.

Children and young people who have previously had a chequered educational history are now attending school regularly, engaging well, and obtaining recognition for their efforts and attitude. Their health has also improved significantly because of the changes in their lifestyles. They are fitter, they have grown, they have gained weight, and they have started to care about their physical appearance.

Children and young people have a range of very positive experiences that enrich their lives and provide them with opportunities to enhance their social skills and develop their self-confidence. They engage in regular activities such as going to the gym, swimming and playing football, which not only provides them with fun but also improves their health. High staff ratios ensure that individual needs can be met safely. Individual memory books provide a visual record of children's and young people's positive experiences in the home.

There are very positive relationships between children, young people and staff. Children and young people say they feel listened to, that their views matter, and that they can talk to staff if they have any concerns. A variety of methods are used to capture the wishes and feelings of the children and young people, and it is evident that their voice is very strong. They are involved in care planning and risk assessment, as well as more day-to-day issues such as choosing their bedroom decor, bedding, activities and food. Cultural needs are well met, and a young person who requested particular food is now able to purchase this and advise staff how to cook it.

Children and young people are able to sustain relationships with people who are important to them, despite living some distance from their home towns. Staff are extremely committed to facilitating this, and they support regular, supervised contact arrangements. The manager has also been proactive in liaising with social workers at short notice to amend and improve arrangements at the request of a young person. This has resulted in a meeting that had a very positive impact on a young person's emotional well-being.

Transitions are managed very well. If it is not possible for a child or young person to visit

the home prior to them moving in, the manager visits them in the current placement, and provides photographs of, and information about, the home. This helps them settle, and promotes a more successful transition. The manager also ensures that she has comprehensive information, so that she can make an accurate assessment of the impact a new child or young person will have on the rest of the group. Children and young people have left the home in a planned way, when it has been in their best interests to have an alternative placement. This has been managed very creatively in one instance, so that relationships with the new staff were able to be forged prior to the move to the new home.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Children and young people feel safe and are safe in this home. They have become significantly safer as a result of living here. Young people who were at high risk of sexual exploitation have had these risks significantly reduced. Young people who were formerly frequently missing from their home or previous placement now rarely go missing or have unauthorised absences from this home. Offending and substance misuse have ceased completely. One stakeholder said: 'This progress is remarkable.'

Staffing levels are high, and staff have an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. They are creative in their approach, and use research to inform their practice. For example, staff have used research to develop resources in relation to online safety and bullying that are then used at residents' meetings. Areas covered include homophobic bullying. Children and young people have scenarios to consider, and this reflection and discussion are effective in improving their engagement. Young people have also had the opportunity to spend a day at a prison. This helped them understand their personal responsibility, the consequences of offending, and victim awareness. They have visited a fire station to help them understand the consequences of playing with fire. These creative methods are very effective as they afford children and young people with a more interesting and engaging experience that promotes their awareness and understanding.

The response to children and young people who go missing is excellent. Staff have, on occasion, put themselves at risk when they have followed young people who have left the home without permission. Wherever possible, staff keep the young person in sight and eventually persuade them to return. When a young person has been missing, the manager is diligent in ensuring that the local authority undertakes a return home interview, and she uses any relevant information gathered from that interview to inform future practice to minimise the likelihood of any reoccurrence.

Risk is assessed regularly and plans are updated in response to incidents and emerging risks. Children and young people are also actively involved in assessing their risks, which is a creative and effective practice worthy of dissemination. They have their own document that addresses risky behaviours, possible outcomes and what alternative strategies they could use. Children and young people then review this document at intervals to enable them to see the progress they have made in becoming safer. This is a really effective way of enabling children and young people to engage and look at their

own behaviour, and develop their own solutions to minimise risk.

Behaviour is well managed. Children and young people have incentives that they work towards, and this encourages positive behaviour. There are detailed behaviour management plans that give staff clear guidance to enable them to respond consistently when behaviour is poor. Physical intervention is used appropriately. Staff have thorough training in a recognised method, their recording is comprehensive, and there is appropriate managerial oversight. The manager and staff have a clear understanding of the impact of external factors on children's and young people's behaviour, and this enables them to respond in a more therapeutic way, based on attachment theory.

The manager demonstrates an excellent understanding of safeguarding procedures, and acts swiftly to protect children and young people when allegations are made. The designated officer for the local authority confirmed there were no concerns, and that the manager has made appropriate and prompt referrals. To further support this, and enhance the knowledge and understanding of the staff team, the designated officer is attending a staff meeting in the near future. This is very proactive and positive practice that demonstrates the importance the manager places on safeguarding. This is also demonstrated by the actions that the manager took in relation to a serious allegation. The manager was open and honest throughout, it was investigated very thoroughly, and as a result, she has changed some procedures to prevent it happening again. She has also ensured that staff are very clear about the new procedures and that these form part of their day-to-day practice.

The procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff are very robust, and result in the appointment of people who, as far as can be ascertained, are safe and suitable to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is very effectively led and managed by an extremely committed, experienced and knowledgeable manager, who demonstrates a high degree of passion and aspiration to improve the lives of the children and young people at this home. She inspires the staff to have the same level of commitment and passion for the children and young people whom they care for and support. Staff say: 'I wouldn't want anyone else as a manager. She is second to none'; 'She is massively supportive'; and, 'I can't fault her. She listens and cares and is motivational.' The manager is currently undertaking the relevant management qualification, and is due to complete this by the end of the year.

Most of the staff were appointed prior to the home opening. This enabled them to have a very thorough induction as a staff team prior to any children or young people being admitted. All staff have undertaken training appropriate to the needs of the children and young people in the home. For example, they have recently completed training in sexually harmful behaviour. All but the most recently appointed staff have either obtained or are undertaking the relevant residential childcare qualification. This ensures that they have the knowledge and skills to provide care of a high quality. Staff feel exceptionally well supported. They have regular good-quality supervision that enables

them to reflect on and develop their practice. They also have regular team meetings and good peer support. This promotes consistent care and support. Staff development is a high priority. Each member of staff has a booklet that provides evidence of their baseline skills and knowledge and how these are being developed through supervision and training.

Monitoring, both internal and external, is thorough and effective. Each child or young person has a number of booklets that address particular aspects of their care, such as their education, placement planning, and health. These detail the starting points and action plans, and identify progress on a regular basis. These are an excellent resource as they not only give a very clear picture of what is happening, but they are also very child friendly and therefore provide the child or young person with an accessible record of their time at the home. The manager uses these and other documents, as well as mechanisms such as audits, supervision, and residents' and staff meetings, to provide her with a comprehensive understanding of the progress children and young people are making. The manager's review of the quality of care is timely and thorough, and is used to inform the home's development plan. She is diligent in obtaining feedback from other professionals, as well as children, young people and their parents, to help her improve the service.

Partnership working is highly effective. Specialist resources, such as substance misuse practitioners, are used to supplement the support that staff provide. Communication is regular and thorough, so that everyone involved in the child's or young person's network works consistently and knows what is happening. The manager has been proactive in inviting other professionals to the staff meetings. These have included the missing person's police officer. This practice enables queries and concerns to be aired and resolved to promote better working relationships. The manager is tenacious in ensuring that children and young people are not disadvantaged by their looked-after status. She provides effective challenge to partners when it is in the child's or young person's best interests. For example, she was successful in asking for a decision regarding a change of social worker to be reconsidered, she explored how to amend a young person's bail conditions, she has negotiated changes to contact arrangements, and she has challenged a school exclusion.

The home's approach to promoting tolerance, equality and diversity is excellent. All staff are very open in their discussions with children and young people. The manager and deputy manager used some learning from a conference to enhance children's and young people's awareness of politics and voting. There are regular displays in the home that address issues such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identity, culture, and other aspects of diversity. Bullying and other issues are addressed in a creative and engaging way at residents' meetings. These measures ensure that children and young people have a strong awareness of difference, and see it as something to be celebrated rather than feared.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young

people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1245565

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Esland North Limited

Registered provider address: 1 Foundry Lane, Milford, Belper DE56 0RN

Responsible individual: Lyndsey Sim

Registered manager: Donna Francis

Inspector

Ros Chapman, social care inspector

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