

# SC459857

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a children's charity. It caters for up to six young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. This includes two emergency beds, one of which is used to provide up to 140 nights per year of 'Staying Close' accommodation. This is in conjunction with the Department for Education's Staying Close Innovation initiative.

**Inspection dates:** 30 to 31 August 2017

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>outstanding</b>
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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	good
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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:** 25 January 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** sustained effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection**

None

## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Young people make exceptional progress in this home, especially those who have lived there long term.
- Staff are exceptionally skilled at forging and growing strong relationships with young people.
- Young people are helped to regulate their emotions more effectively.
- Educational progress is prioritised and all young people are enabled to succeed.
- The home is making excellent use of funding from the government's Innovation Programme to support a 'pop-up bed' for ex-residents.
- Risk assessments are comprehensive and regularly updated.
- The management team is knowledgeable and takes proactive action to safeguard young people.
- The risks involved in going missing from the home have substantially reduced.
- Behaviour management is highly effective.
- There is a very effective registered manager in place.
- Admissions to the home are carefully considered to maintain a successful mix of young people.
- The physical environment of the home is kept safe from hazards, and is warm and homely.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Individual incentive systems are insufficiently linked to placement plans.
- Staff turnover has been high, and strategies are not in place to minimise the chances of this happening again.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/10/2016	Full	Good
18/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
15/09/2015	Full	Good

## What does the children's home need to do to improve?

### Recommendations

- Ensure that staff encourage an enthusiasm for positive behaviour through the use of positive behaviour strategies in line with the child's relevant plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.13)
- Ensure that the patterns and trends of turnover of staff are monitored and reviewed, and negative trends are suitably addressed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.19)

### Inspection judgements

#### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people, especially those who have been at the home long term, make exceptional progress. Staff have detailed knowledge about each young person's preferences and needs, and are totally committed to promoting what is best for them. This approach results in young people achieving successes and having experiences that were not considered likely given their starting points. For example, some young people have successfully passed key examinations, which will enable them to follow their dream career paths. Other young people are now confident enough to function well in the community, and even have their own friendship groups.

The members of the excellent staff team are consistently encouraging, warm and nurturing in their routine interactions with young people. Social workers note the staff's skill and tenacity in building positive relationships and supporting young people. One said, 'The staff have been really good at building a relationship with him and supporting him. They worked really hard at engaging him; it wasn't easy but they stuck with it.' This persistence has paid off in that young people who were previously challenging to engage now trust certain adults and have started to engage in activities with staff.

Young people's emotional health needs are met exceedingly well. For example, there is a picture wall of all the young people who have lived there, and farewells to staff and young people are celebrated sensitively. The staff are willing to show emotional warmth to young people by, for example, hugging them and showing delight at their achievements. This helps young people to develop emotional literacy and also shows them how to regulate their emotions. Another young person who used to take out her angry feelings on the home's fabric and furnishings now chooses to take time out in her room instead, and then talks the issue over with staff.

The home has excellent links with health professionals. This, coupled with leaders, managers and staff who are proactive and persistent in pursuing services for young

people, results in excellent outcomes. For instance, the home actively sought and obtained specialist counselling for a young person with particularly complex needs. This has given the young person the best possible chance of overcoming the impact of a severe childhood trauma.

The individual educational success of young people is a major priority for this home. Each young person's attendance record is logged and monitored, and appropriate action taken where necessary. Links with education providers are strong, and contact is often daily. The home rightly believes that getting young people to attend school is the first area to be prioritised. They use practical strategies to achieve this; as a young person confirms, 'They are really annoying on schooldays until you get up, opening the curtains and singing to you.' The home ensures that all young people can experience educational achievement, and young people have various certificates in areas such as boxing, sexual health and appropriate education concerning drug and alcohol use. This is excellent practice, in that it gives young people valuable life skills as well as enabling all of them to experience success.

Young people are listened to in this home and in the wider organisation. A social worker said, 'They really listen to his wishes and feelings.' Young people have presented to the trustees of the organisation, and have attended a staff meeting in the home. Some of their ideas about the reward system have been implemented. This helps young people to realise that their voice matters and raises their self-esteem.

Young people receive excellent staff support and guidance to prepare them for independent living. There is a comprehensive, standardised booklet detailing all the necessary skills to successfully live independently. In discussion with the young person, staff personalise this booklet according to the young person's particular skills and requirements. Young people can then follow a programme that is geared to their interests and needs. This is effective in maintaining their interest and commitment.

The wider organisation is involved in the government's Innovation Programme. It is piloting a 'Staying Close' arrangement for young people who are leaving care. This home is involved in the planning for the new semi-independent accommodation for young people who are leaving this home and other homes. In addition, the home is currently piloting a 'pop-up bed' for young people who were previously long-term residents. This bed is designed for occasional use by appropriate young people who may be in crisis, or need to return to the home for other reasons such as to maintain friendship groups. The management group at the home has thought through the implications of this pop-up bed extremely well. Its members have considered the possible impact on all parties, and taken highly effective steps to reduce any negative effects. The bed has been successfully used on a number of occasions, and offers an excellent resource to young people who have recently moved into independent living.

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

Staff provide young people with outstanding levels of support to help them learn to live safely. Risk assessments are thoroughly completed and regularly updated. They give an

accurate reflection of individual risks to each young person, and contain useful strategies for reducing risk effectively. The staff are proactive in assisting young people to stay safe. For example, they were astute and persistent in identifying an adult who was unsafely involved with a young person in the home. They worked closely with other agencies, and were appropriately supported in dissuading the adult from having further contact with the young person. They also then completed some creative work with the young person to help them understand the risks such contact poses. This excellent intervention not only ensured the young person's safety but allowed them to gain a vital insight into their own vulnerability.

The approach taken by staff to help young people to reduce the times they go missing is excellent. Staff in the home have been highly effective in reducing the risks in missing from home incidents. For example, they will follow young people as far as is possible to do. They demonstrate great tenacity by continuing to follow even when young people put them under great pressure not to do so. The staff are also willing to go wherever the young person who is missing is located, and continue their attempts to persuade them to return. A social worker commented, 'They [staff] made big efforts to see him wherever he was, and he's started to respond well. He hasn't been missing in a while.' This proactive approach to safeguarding means that young people begin to realise that some adults care about whether they are safe or not.

The home maintains a comprehensive overview and analysis of individual young people's trends in going missing from the home. This helps the staff to identify and influence young people's patterns. There have been some high numbers of overnight missing episodes, but these are significantly less than they were. Currently, most missing episodes are young people being late back, rather than staying out overnight. This, plus the increasing tendency for young people to remain in contact when not in the home, means that young people become safer.

Young people benefit significantly from being cared for by staff who skilfully respond to their negative actions. Behaviour management is highly effective in this home. Restraints have not been used for a considerable period of time, nor have the police attended in recent times to help manage behaviour. This is despite some very challenging situations happening in the home. Sanctions are also sparingly used, and are usually restorative in nature, which helps young people realise the impact of their actions. This model works especially well. Staff rely on their knowledge of the young person and their triggers to de-escalate situations. This, coupled with the strong relationships that exist between staff and young people, is highly effective. A social worker commented, 'There have been fewer outbursts than I expected. I think that this is down to their very calm approach and skills in de-escalation.'

One young person described behaviour management as 'lenient' and another described it as 'flexible'. This sense of fairness helps young people to accept restrictions on their behaviour. They are also incentivised through a reward system to promote positive behaviour. This is appropriately done with, rather than to the young person. However, for a minority of young people it could be more strongly linked to areas of concern in the placement plan. This shortfall does not have any negative impact on the care provided

to young people.

Staff have excellent safeguarding knowledge, and work well with child protection agencies. They are proactive at assessing individual safeguarding risks and request strategy meetings appropriately. Senior staff are vigilant about signs that may mean a young person is at risk of abuse, and are prompt at referring such concerns to the local authority. A social worker noted, 'They do everything they can to keep him safe.'

The environment in the home is clean, comfortable and homely. There are plenty of cushions and places to sit, and pictures of young people in every space. The home is very well maintained, and the necessary risk assessments and fire testing routinely and reliably take place.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

There is a very effective registered manager in place who is appropriately qualified. The wider management group has recently changed, and there is a newly appointed deputy manager. Most members of the wider staff group are also in their first or second year at the home. They are extremely positive about their work. One said, 'I feel really lucky to work here,' and another said, 'I love coming into work each day.' All staff spoken to had a huge respect for the registered manager. One said, 'She is always really supportive.' However, these same staff also said how very tiring the rota system and sleeping-in pattern was.

In the last 18 months, the home has had almost a complete turnover of staff. This has been managed well, but obviously had a negative impact on young people who lost a number of staff that they had begun to be attached to. In addition, the registered manager has had to train up a large number of new staff to meet the high expectations she rightly has for how young people should be treated. The general consensus from the staff and the registered manager is that the new team is now 'just about in place'. Although a degree of staff movement is inevitable, the home's high quality of care would be vulnerable if there were staff movement on this scale again. Leaders and managers are very aware of this concern. Although there is not yet an analysis and strategy to minimise the factors that make people leave, leaders and managers display an obvious determination to avoid a similar repetition in the future.

The registered manager is highly aware of the needs of all the young people in the home. She represents a stable figure for those who have lived there long term and has been successful in advocating for them in areas such as receiving appropriate therapy. The registered manager is very protective of her home and the young people in it, and is anxious not to de-stabilise the mix. Admissions to the home are very carefully considered. As a social worker said, 'I had to work hard to get her in. The registered manager thought about the other young people and weighed up the impact first.'

Once in the home, young people receive total commitment to their needs, no matter how complex. For example, following a very serious incident, the management team carefully considered whether a young person's placement was sustainable. A social

worker said, 'I was impressed with how carefully they weighed up whether to keep him, and really glad that they did.'

Staff supervision and appraisal are routinely carried out to a high standard. Supervision sessions are a good mix of support and challenge. Notifications are completed well, and appropriate updates are sent. The home has a recently updated statement of purpose and a thorough location assessment is in place.

Files are well kept, and good contact is maintained with supervising social workers, who are all positive about the home's communications.

## **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:** SC459857

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** St Christopher's Fellowship

**Registered provider address:** St Christopher's Fellowship, 1 Putney High Street,  
London SW15 1SZ

**Responsible individual:** Ron Giddens

**Registered manager:** Jennifer Hiskey

## Inspector

Bridget Goddard, social care inspector



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