

1233899

Registered provider: Active Ark Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a private home. It provides care and accommodation for up to two young people with behavioural and/or emotional difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

Inspection dates: 6 to 7 September 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because

- The home provides a stable and homely environment that promotes young people's safety and well-being.
- Staff show strength in building strong and positive relationships with young people. This enables them to develop trusting and meaningful relationships.
- Young people are encouraged and supported to be involved in their care planning. Consequently, young people understand that they are able to influence their day-to-day care and future planning.
- Staff value and promote the importance of education and learning. Staff have developed significant relationships with local schools and colleges. This ensures that young people receive the optimum support they need to engage with learning.
- The home works in close partnership with a range of health professionals and services. Consequently, healthcare services are very responsive when young people need them.
- Staff work closely with family members to ensure that young people stay in touch and have good opportunities to develop those relationships that are important to them.
- Young people make good progress in reducing risk-taking behaviours that compromise their safety. For example, there have been significant reductions in the frequency of young people going missing.
- A suitably qualified and experienced registered manager leads the home. He is keen to advocate for young people.
- Unanimous feedback from a range of professionals confirmed a consistently high level of satisfaction with the home and the service it provides.

The children's home's areas for development

- Improved electronic recording processes is needed to support management oversight and challenge when it occurs.
- Improved recording of fire evacuation drills is needed to enable good evaluation of their effectiveness.
- Communication and promoting transparency with Ofsted needs to be improved. This relates specifically to providing evaluative reports and appropriate notifications to Ofsted within the required timescales.

Recent inspection history

Not applicable

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(4)(b))	13/10/2017
The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to HMCI. (Regulation 44(7)(a))	13/10/2017
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ('a quality of care review') at least once every 6 months; and supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45(1)and(4)(a))	13/10/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. This relates specifically to making improvements in the recording of fire drills to identify the time and duration of evacuations, so that their effectiveness can be monitored. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5.)
- Case records must be kept up-to-date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. This relates specifically to ensuring that manager's comments are reflected in case records when incidents are reviewed or challenged. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3.)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is the home's first inspection following its registration with Ofsted in October 2016. The home provides a homely, caring environment where young people feel safe and well supported. A small and dedicated staff team, that shows strength in building strong and positive relationships, cares for young people. Consequently, young people have good opportunities to develop trusting and meaningful relationships.

Staff encourage and support young people to take an active part in care planning. On a regular basis, discussions take place with young people about their wishes and feelings. Records of these discussions demonstrate the influence that young people have in their daily care and future planning. Staff are good advocates for young people, but the home also ensures that they have good access to independent advice and support so that young people feel listened to and understand that their views are valued. One professional commented, 'It is one of the homes that [stand] out. Staff are very knowledgeable. They encourage the young person to engage with me as their advocate. That really helped. They are good at putting the child first.'

Staff value and promote the importance of education and learning. They have cultivated good working relationships with local schools and colleges. This ensures that young people receive the optimum support they need to help them successfully engage with learning.

Similarly, the home has close working partnerships with a range of health professionals and services. This ensures that those healthcare services are very responsive when young people need them. Staff support young people to understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. They promote the importance of good nutrition and exercise as part of their daily routine. A social worker commented, 'She has made significant progress in this home. Prior to placement, there was no engagement with education for years. She was regularly missing from care and could not engage with services to promote her health. It has been a complete turnaround. She has been to college and they have used her as a mentor for others.'

The young person who currently lives at this home is planning with staff her return home within the next few weeks. She was keen to express her gratitude for the support that she has received from staff, and particularly from the home's manager and her key worker. As well as being highly child focused, the home also greatly values the importance of family. Staff strive to extend their support to maintain those family relationships that are most important to young people.

The young person commented, 'I like living here, but it is my time to go home. Staff have been so supportive, especially when my mum takes ill. They take me home and get a hotel so I can stay over and help my mum and take care of the dogs. Staff are helping me to become more independent.' Her parent said, 'She's been doing really well at the home. I am pleased with the progress she has made in college. I get on well with staff

and they keep me well informed. I have nothing negative to say about the home. It has been a massive help to me and my daughter.'

Young people enjoy good opportunities to become involved with the community and have good access to a range of activities and local interests. For the current young person living at the home, this has included being involved in music and boxing and taking part in a young leaders' course. This has involved her in mentoring other children and young people at a local youth centre. As well as the fun and enjoyment gained from this, these activities have helped to build her confidence, resilience and self-esteem.

Professionals consulted during this inspection were unanimous in their praise of the home and the high level of support provided to the young person living there. Her social worker reflected many of the sentiments of other professionals involved. She said, 'This has been a great placement. She has made brilliant relationships with staff, especially her key worker. A real success story, this is down to the relationships with staff. This is the most successful placement to date. Staff keep me well informed. She treats it like home and it feels like a family home.'

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

Staff prioritise young people's safety and well-being. They carefully consider young people's previous risk-taking behaviours and vulnerabilities. Risk assessments and behaviour management plans are comprehensive and regularly reviewed. They provide detailed guidance for staff. This helps them to identify risks and to understand the most successful strategies for promoting young people's safety.

Staff promote positive behaviour with praise and encouragement. They also offer small incentives to reward young people's achievements. Formal sanctions are rare. Additionally, there has not been any use of physical intervention to manage behaviour. Staff routinely encourage young people to reflect on their behaviours and discuss the alternative choices they can make. Because of the positive relationships that exist, the young person is proving to be more open to listening and accepting advice. As a result, she is confident that she knows how to keep herself safe.

Staff are knowledgeable in a range of child protection issues and safeguarding matters. They receive regular training opportunities that help them to develop their knowledge and skills. The registered manager has recently completed an accredited safeguarding training course for trainers. Its aim is to focus on detection and support for young people at risk of child sexual exploitation. This enhances the knowledge and support that he can provide to his staff team. Staff understand the importance of internet safety and dangers such as online grooming and peer abuse.

The home has proved effective in protecting young people who have a history of being frequently missing. The young person currently in placement has only had one recent episode of being missing since coming to this home. On this occasion, staff were effective in maintaining contact with her and securing her safe return to the home. The

reduction in this behaviour has significantly improved her safety. The opportunity for involvement in other high-risk activities, such as alcohol and drug misuse, has also significantly minimised.

Fire safety evacuation drills are taking place and recorded as part of the home's safety administration. However, the records do not reflect the time of day when the evacuation drill took place, or the length of time it took to evacuate the home. It is hard to know whether young people are as confident in evacuating the home at night time as during daytime hours. In addition, the record does not offer sufficient information to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these drills.

Recruitment and selection of staff are supported by safer recruitment practice. Staff are appropriately checked and vetted. They only start working in the home when they are deemed suitable. Staff make sure that all visitors have suitable credentials and a good reason for visiting the home. These measures ensure that young people's safety is not compromised by exposing them to adults who may do them harm.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The ambitious and committed registered manager ensures that children and young people receive a high standard of individualised care from the staff. He is qualified and experienced to lead his team well and he manages this service effectively. The registered manager has worked for a number of years for this company. He holds a level 5 qualification in leadership and management of children's residential services and is committed to continuing his own professional development.

He leads his staff team by example and takes a 'hands-on' approach, working alongside his staff in providing a high standard of care and support. The registered manager is fully committed to multi-disciplinary working and shares excellent relationships with a number of other professionals and agencies. He is a keen advocate for young people. He demonstrates a good ability to challenge other professionals when it seems appropriate to do so, to meet the young person's best interests.

The home is meeting its stated objectives as set out in its statement of purpose. The registered manager takes care to ensure that his staff team has the relevant skills and experience to meet the needs of young people that live in this home. Staff benefit from a comprehensive induction and training programme that ensures that they have good access to a wide range of essential and specialist training experiences. Those staff that do not yet hold the level 3 diploma award are registered and actively working towards achieving this.

Staff said that they feel well supported in carrying out their roles. They describe almost daily discussions with the registered manager when on duty and cite regular supervision and staff meetings as key to the close working relationship they share. Staff participate in an annual appraisal process to review their competencies and identify further developmental needs. The registered manager monitors ongoing staff training needs to

ensure that staff attend training at regular and appropriate frequencies. This ensures that they have good opportunities to maintain and develop their knowledge and skills.

Young people's records are safely stored on the company's electronic system and well maintained. They provide the registered manager with excellent opportunities to review the young person's daily progress and plans. The electronic recording system is embedded into practice. However, during the inspection it was highlighted that management oversight and challenge of incidents recorded do not routinely reflect the registered manager's comments. At least one record was incomplete and it failed to detail the registered manager's actions following the event.

The registered manager is committed to the continuing development and improvement of the home. He regularly asks professionals to complete a survey to gain their view of the service. This allows him to test satisfaction and to identify areas for future development and improvement. He makes good use of the home's electronic records system to develop reporting that can usefully assist his regular quality assurance of the home.

A draft copy of the registered manager's six-monthly report was made available during inspection. However, it had not been completed or submitted to Ofsted within the required timescale. In addition, although the external monitoring arrangements have continued with an independent visit to the home every month, reports have not been provided to Ofsted with any consistency. The quality of the reporting lacks clear evaluation. Overall, it falls short in demonstrating good-quality assessment of the home's arrangements to meet the safety and welfare of young people. This has not affected the quality of care provided, but has not demonstrated a transparency or rigorous scrutiny of the home.

The home has not notified Ofsted of serious concerns about the young people living there, including two incidents requiring police involvement. However, during the inspection it was clear that all other relevant parties had been informed. Although the lack of notification to Ofsted had no immediate effect on the young person, this again reduces transparency with Ofsted.

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: 1233899

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Active Ark Limited

Registered provider address: Armstrong Watson, Birbeck House, Duke Street,
Penrith CA11 7NA

Responsible individual: Louise Matthews

Registered manager: Graham Abernethy

Inspector

Gillian Walters, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

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