

# SC055912

Registered provider: Verve Life Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care for four young people up to the age of 18. The home offers care for young people who have learning and physical disabilities. The home is privately owned.

**Inspection dates:** 13 to 14 November 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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

**Date of last inspection:** 1 March 2017

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

**Enforcement action since last inspection:**

None.

## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Young people receive individualised care from a committed staff team.

- Young people make good progress in all areas of their development.
- Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff.
- The staff are in regular contact with schools, which helps to support young people's educational progress.
- Staff support young people's emotional and physical well-being.
- Staff encourage young people to develop independence skills that match their age and ability.
- Staff have good relationships with parents, social workers and other professionals.
- Young people have access to a range of activities that reflect their interests and hobbies.
- Staff seek young people's views about their care.
- Staff make sure that the home environment is well maintained and homely.
- Staff are positive about their work, and are supported through regular supervision.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Pre-employment checks are not always completed before staff start working.
- Safeguarding incidents are not always notified to HMCI.
- Staff do not record measures of control in accordance with regulations.
- Managers and staff do not have young people's statutory plans reviewed when restrictive measures are used.
- Managers have not discussed the changes in night-time staffing with social workers.
- The independent visitor's reports do not provide an assessment of the home's arrangements to safeguard and protect young people.
- Staff do not have the necessary knowledge of Makaton or safe holding.
- Fire doors are sometimes propped open with furniture.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
15/08/2016	Full	Good
22/12/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
22/07/2015	Full	Requires improvement

## 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
<p>After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must - take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment in the children's home. (Regulation 25(1)(a))</p> <p>This is with particular reference to ensuring that fire-resisting doors are being held open only with an appropriate automatic door hold-open release device.</p>	22/12/17
<p>The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home if full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(3)(d))</p>	22/12/17
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees undertake appropriate continuing professional development. (Regulation 33(4)(a))</p> <p>This is in relation to training to raise awareness of Makaton and safe holding.</p>	05/03/18
<p>The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure, the time and location of the measure, a description of the measure and its duration, details of any methods or steps taken to avoid the use of the measure, the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; and the effectiveness and any consequence of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii))</p>	22/01/17
<p>The registered person must ensure that, within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person authorised by the registered person to do so, has spoken to the user about the measure, has signed the record to confirm it is accurate and within 5 days of the use of the measure adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(b)(i)(ii)(iii))</p>	22/01/17

### Recommendations

- Ensure staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

This is with specific reference to consulting with the placing authority regarding night-time staffing arrangements.

- Where a child has an EHC plan or statement of special educational needs in which a specific type of restraint is provided for use as part of the child's day to day routine, the home is exempted from the recording requirement in regulation 35(4). Where these plans provide for a specific type of restraint that is not for day-to-day use, on the occasions when such a restraint is used it must still be recorded in accordance with regulation 35(3). Any other restraint used must always be recorded as a restraint. In any case where restraint is used, it must comply with the requirements of regulation. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.61)

This is with specific reference to ensuring that restrictions to young people's movement, such as stairgates, are appropriately recorded and reviewed.

- Ensure 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 within the home which the registered person considers to be serious (40(4)(e)). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)
- Ensure any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person makes a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the home's care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65 , paragraph 15.5)

## Inspection judgements

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

Young people live in an environment that is warm and welcoming. Nurturing and attentive staff know the young people well and help to create a homely atmosphere. One young person told the inspector: 'Everything is good. Staff are great. Even if I'm going through the world's worst day, they are there for me.'

Young people have good school attendance. Clear daily routines help young people to be on time and well prepared for the school day. Staff work closely with schools, and good communication supports young people to make good academic progress. An assistant

headteacher told the inspector: 'We have great communication with the home. We talk frequently by phone and email. We also keep in touch by the home-school diaries. If we need anything, it's acted upon straight away.'

Young people are helped to attend appointments with dentists, doctors and opticians. Staff ensure that the experience of accessing health services is positive for young people. For example, staff advocated that a dental examination and an eye examination were undertaken together to reduce any distress for the young person. Young people have detailed health plans. When young people have specific health needs, for example epilepsy, protocols are in place to help staff to provide safe healthcare. In keeping with young people's level of understanding, staff help them to increase their awareness of their prescribed medication. For example, in preparation for adulthood, the staff are helping one young person to administer his own medication. This is helping him to understand his own health needs. Young people are encouraged to enjoy a balanced diet and to think about how food can affect their health. For example, staff started a discussion about the impact of sugary drinks on young people's teeth. This resulted in healthier alternatives being purchased in the weekly shop.

Young people have access to a range of leisure activities both inside and outside of the home. For example, young people enjoy doing crafts, walking to the park, going to the cinema and taking day trips to places of interest. One young person attends a rugby club and another young person is an active member of the local authority Children in Care Council.

Staff support some young people to communicate in their preferred style. For example, staff will write out daily routines in Widget. However, this same level of detail is not given to young people who are more familiar with Makaton.

In keeping with their plans, young people are encouraged to keep in contact with people who are important to them.

Staff work hard to help young people to develop basic life skills, in keeping with their age and ability. Independence targets are individually agreed and take into account the young person's views, knowledge and skills. For example, one young person can now identify notes and coins. The young person has a bank account and feels more able to manage his own money.

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

Young people benefit from spending quality time with staff who support them to keep safe. Staff ensure that young people have personalised plans and risk assessments that match their needs and risks. A member of staff told the inspector, 'Consistency in this house is amazing. We have good communications. We all read the documents and sign them. The children know that boundaries are in place and everyone has the same boundaries. It makes them feel safe.'

Young people do not go missing from the home and there are no known risks in relation

to child sexual exploitation or radicalisation. Parental controls on electronic devices and effective supervision by staff mean that young people are safe using the internet.

Young people are comfortable in each other's company. One young person told the inspector: 'They are like brothers to me, we help each other out. There is no bullying. The manager will not tolerate bullying.'

Staff make sure that young people know about how to make complaints. One young person has made complaints and has been happy with the responses. This helps young people to exercise their rights and to influence their own care.

Young people are encouraged to act responsibly and to show respect for themselves and others. Staff use positive reinforcement and rewards to encourage good behaviour. For example, one young person receives stars for not hitting and spitting. When he has achieved six stars, he receives an award. The focus on promoting positive behaviour means that there is less need to use negative consequences. However, when negative consequences are used, the detail in the record and managerial oversight is not in line with regulation. Poor records and insufficient managerial oversight mean that opportunities to understand the effectiveness of measures of control and develop practice are lost.

Physical intervention is rare. Staff use their training in conflict management and disengagement to de-escalate challenging behaviour. However, some staff have not had the opportunity to undertake training in safe holding. This means that staff are less informed about how to physically intervene safely, if this is necessary.

Staff complete regular checks on gas, electrical and fire safety systems. Personalised plans ensure that there are clear arrangements for the safe evacuation of young people in the event of a fire. However, during the inspection, furniture was being used to prop open the fire doors. This compromises the fire safety arrangements.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

The registered manager has been in post since April 2015 and holds a level 4 in the management of residential services for children and young people. Three staff are qualified to level 3 diploma in residential childcare. Two other staff are undertaking the level 3 diploma, with an anticipated completion date of August 2018, which is within the required time.

Staff have a high regard for the registered manager and say that they feel supported. Regular supervision and access to a comprehensive training programme help to equip them for their role. A member of staff shared with the inspector: 'The manager has so much knowledge and she is willing to spend time with you and to share. She is a caring, kind human being.' New staff benefit from a comprehensive programme of induction. Annual appraisals, which include a development and training plan, take place for staff who have been in post for longer than 12 months. Regular staff meetings help to foster good staff morale. One member of staff told the inspector: 'I love working here. It's like

a home away from home.'

Since the last inspection, some staff have left the home. Vacancies are advertised promptly. To ensure consistency for the young people, the manager ensures that gaps in the rota are covered by the home's permanent staff or by regular agency staff. This means that young people receive care and support from staff who know them well. However, the manager has not ensured the appropriate vetting of staff. Agency staff commence their duties without identification, references or evidence of qualifications. Gaps in employment histories are not checked. Insufficient attention to safe recruitment means that there is potential for young people to receive care from unsuitable adults.

The registered manager ensures that relationships between the team and other professionals are positive and productive. This includes social workers, the local authority designated officer and teachers. A social worker told the inspector, 'Staff have worked exceptionally well with me.' Constructive relationships support young people to obtain the help and support that they need to make progress.

Since the last inspection, there have been two allegations about staff conduct. The local authority was notified on both occasions. However, in one instance the manager failed to inform Ofsted. Neglecting to report allegations of abuse to outside agencies reduces external scrutiny of the conduct of the home.

The home has recently ceased using night staff for part of the week, and instead is using two staff to sleep in overnight. The manager has ensured that risk assessments are in place to identify how safety concerns will be managed. However, the change in arrangements and the associated risk assessments have not been shared with the local authority or agreed as part of young people's placement plans. A lack of consultation with the local authority means that there has been no opportunity for social workers to contribute their views on the changes in staff arrangements.

As a safety measure, the front door is fitted with a high handle, a chain and a bolt. A safety gate is fitted to the kitchen door and to the stairs. Two young people have deprivation of liberty orders in place, and another young person has the capability to open the front door and the gates. However, a fourth young person has their movements restricted. This restriction is not covered in his education, health and care plan. This means that there is no formal agreement to show that these restrictions are necessary to keep the young person safe.

The manager is child focused, enthusiastic and determined. She regularly reviews the quality of the care to help her to identify areas for development. An independent visitor visits the home once a month. However, the independent person's report lacks an assessment of the effectiveness of the home. This shortfall means that those who refer to the report are not well informed about the home's strengths and weaknesses.

## **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 difference 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:** SC055912

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

**Registered provider:** Verve Life Limited

**Registered provider address:** 198 High Street, Burbage, Marlborough, Wiltshire  
SN8 3AB

**Responsible individual:** David Powell

**Registered manager:** Clare Alele

## Inspector

Alison Cooper, social care inspector

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