

# 1255520

Registered provider: Sandcastle Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a private organisation. It is registered to accommodate up to three children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is registered for single gender occupancy only.

**Inspection dates:** 14 to 15 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 **Good**

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

**Date of last inspection:** The home was registered in June 2017. This is its first inspection since registration.

**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 environment feels warm and welcoming. It replicates a family home as much as possible. This helps young people feel comfortable and secure in

their environment.

- Staff and managers are very good at listening to young people's views about their placement. They act on, and convey to others, the young people's wishes.
- Young people are well supported in many ways. These include high staffing ratios, intensive support when needed, regular opportunities to engage with staff through key-worker sessions, and the availability of therapeutic support.
- Staff are extremely skilled in managing incidents where young people are in crisis and need high levels of support. Staff ensure that young people are safe and offer reassurance and kindness. Staff communicate clearly with young people when their wishes cannot be acted on, and the reasons for this.
- Young people have periods of good engagement with staff. They enjoy a range of activities and develop positive relationships.
- Staff understand the significance of family contact and try to work with young people to ensure that this is safe and positive for them. Staff also understand the risks associated with family contact for some young people and put steps in place to manage those risks.
- When young people go missing, staff make every effort to locate and return them. They also work positively with external agencies in response to incidents of young people going missing.
- Support from managers, including the wider management structure, is evident in the home. Staff report that there is a positive and supportive leadership culture.
- The staff team and managers have remained strong and positive through a difficult period. Young people have been very unsettled, have had periods of crisis, and have shown some consistent negative behaviours that have challenged staff and been exhausting to manage.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The home does not always notify the regulator of serious incidents. This relates specifically to incidents of vulnerable young people going missing for considerable periods where police are involved in locating and returning them.
- The home's updated statement of purpose has not been sent to the regulator. The statement of purpose supplied to the regulator does not contain details of staff qualifications and experience.
- Safe recruitment procedures could be improved to evidence that every effort is being made to check any potential concerns in relation to staff recruited to work at the home.
- Young people have not engaged in education while at the home. Although the home actively supports and encourages education, staff have not been successful in their efforts to date.



## 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 of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. Regulation 16(3)(b)	21/12/2017
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(3)(b)	21/12/2017

### Recommendations

- Where children placed in a home are not participating in education because they have been excluded or are not on a school roll for some other reason, the registered person and staff must work closely with the placing authority so that the child is supported and enabled to resume full-time education as soon as possible. In the interim, the child should be supported to sustain or regain their confidence in education and be engaged in suitable structured activities. If no education place is identified by the placing authority, the registered person must challenge them to meet the child's needs under regulation 5 (engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- As set out in regulations 31-33, the registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

### Inspection judgements

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

Young people at this home benefit from an enthusiastic and committed staff team that makes every effort to engage young people in their placement and enable them to form positive relationships and make progress.

The home itself is furnished and decorated thoughtfully and replicates a family home as much as possible. Soft furnishings, pictures and photographs make the environment warm and comfortable, and contribute to the welcoming and relaxed ambience of the home.

Young people admitted to the home have significant and complex issues. The home's matching process details young people's risks and evidences how the home can meet their needs, so that young people are correctly matched at the point of placement. Unfortunately, despite the staff team's very best efforts, two recent young people placed at the home made limited progress and their placements ultimately broke down. Evidence gathered on inspection shows that support provided for young people has been intensive and targeted. The young people were helped to settle as much as possible, but their complex needs resulted in both young people taking such risks that their placements could not be sustained.

Engagement in activities has been good at times, with the young people forming positive relationships with staff and taking part in activities of their choice. One young person was particularly enthusiastic about dressing up for Halloween. Staff went to great lengths to support and participate in this. They also enabled her to go 'trick or treating' for the first time.

Young people's health needs are well met. One young person has extensive involvement from a wide variety of health professionals. Staff assist the young person to make and attend appointments, and support her when health professionals' decisions and treatment plans are upsetting for her. Staff also support young people to attend accident and emergency departments where this is appropriate, and stay with young people during hospital admissions. The staff communicate effectively with health professionals regarding young people's complex needs, which helps to provide a consistent approach.

Young people are administered with prescribed medications and there are good systems in place for the administration and recording of medications. The home has a psychotherapist who visits at least weekly and more frequently when required. Young people have the opportunity to engage either formally or informally. Staff receive training from the psychotherapist in the humanistic biosocial model of care that is used by the home. This training can be bespoke to the young people residing in the home.

Staff understand the importance of family contact for young people. They also understand how issues in respect of young people's families and their contact arrangements can impact on young people's behaviour and mood. Staff offer a high level of support for young people to manage their emotional response to family issues and maintain positive contact.

Young people are listened to by staff and managers. They feel able to express their views about their care and placement, and know that their wishes will be listened to and acted on. Young people have very regular key-worker sessions and weekly young people's meetings, and are given the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings on a day-to-day basis to the adults caring for them. Managers are strong advocates and ensure that young people's voices are heard by wider agencies.

Young people benefit from a high staffing ratio and can be supported on a 2:1 basis

should they need that intense level of support.

The young people currently placed at the home have not accessed education for the short duration of their placements. This has been due to their complex needs, resulting in them showing behaviours that are not compatible with engagement in education in any form. Staff have worked with the virtual head and with a local college to identify any provision that might be appropriate to meet the young people's needs. However, the young people have not been able to access education due to the multitude of other issues affecting their lives during their time in placement.

Transitions into the home are planned thoroughly. New admissions are carefully matched to young people already in the home, who are also consulted about any new young person identified as a potential placement match. Young people are invited to visit the home for tea and are introduced to the other young people at the home. They are then invited to say how they would like their bedroom to be personalised with curtains, bedding, pictures and posters. They can visit a further time to bring some of their belongings and start to transition gradually into their new home. This is a very positive, well-thought-through transition process.

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

Risk assessments clearly identify areas of risk for young people, as well as how any risks can be minimised and mitigated. Young people at this home are admitted with significant and complex risks that staff have shown immense skill and resilience in managing.

One young person who has recently left the home had persistent missing from home episodes which impacted on her safety. Staff tried hard to encourage her to work with them to reduce the missing incidents and to make the home a fun and safe place to be for her. However, the young person persisted in going missing on a regular basis. Staff went to great lengths to locate the young person when she went missing and encourage her to return. If she refused to return, staff ensured that she was safe. Agencies consulted about the home's management of the missing episodes were extremely positive about the efforts made to keep the young person safe. They also commented on the very good level of communication maintained by the home, and the information staff provided. The police missing from home coordinator gave praise to the staff and manager, who said, 'I thought the home did brilliantly with X... Staff always kept me informed. I feel the home went above and beyond. The staff spent so much time in (name of city) looking for her, and they fed back lots of information to social workers and police that they would not otherwise have known about.' The young person's placement has now been ended and she has been admitted to a secure setting to ensure her safety.

Self-harm is an identified risk for one young person. Staff at the home have received training in self-harm which is individualised to the young person. Staff maintain a high level of vigilance throughout the day and night to ensure the young person's safety. They are attuned to signs that a young person is going into crisis and manage such incidents very skilfully. Staff are trained in first aid and so can treat any minor self-harm. They have a ligature kit and have been instructed how to use this if necessary. Staff are also highly proactive in working with other agencies to manage the self-harm risk.

Managers understand when young people's risks have escalated to the point that their safety cannot be maintained in the home. Managers work hard to ensure that a meeting is held to review strategies for managing behaviour and consider the appropriateness of the placement.

Risks associated with family contact are understood and plans are put in place to try to ensure that contact is safe for young people. Where risk during family contact is unmanageable, alternative plans are made so that young people can still have contact but in a safer environment. Staff support safe contact by, for example, supervising phone calls between young people and family members, and by inviting families to the home so that contact can take place there with staff support.

Physical intervention is rarely used in the home. Staff are trained in management of actual or potential aggression and feel confident to use this when necessary. Records of physical interventions are detailed and evidence the numerous de-escalation techniques used prior to the physical intervention. The home has good systems in place for notifying social workers of intervention incidents and provides detailed incident logs. Records signpost to any documents that have been updated, such as risk assessments and behaviour management plans, and link to key-worker sessions held with young people about incidents. The home's manager evaluates each incident to identify whether anything different could have been done to support the young person without recourse to physical intervention.

Behaviour management is based on a reward system, although sanctions and restitution are in place for some incidents. Young people have 'reward charts' for completing certain tasks during the week and they are rewarded with bigger treats for positive behaviour. Clear strategies are recorded in young people's plans which identify behaviour management methods that work for them.

Staff are trained in e-safety and recognise the risks to young people. Where young people have elevated risks in this area, any access to the internet they have is closely supervised to ensure that they use the internet safely.

Where young people are considered to be at high risk of child sexual exploitation, the home works in close partnership with the local Deter team to ensure that young people's risks are shared, and that agencies work together to protect them.

Although the home uses safe recruitment practice to help ensure that staff employed in the home are suitable to work with young people, where potential concerns arise in an employee's employment history these are not thoroughly checked to ensure that the concerns have been adequately addressed. This results in a recommendation being made.

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

This is the home's first full inspection since it was registered in June 2017. The manager is new to the home, but has previous experience in managing children's homes and has the relevant management qualification. The manager shows commitment to young people and has high expectations of staff at the home.

Staff report a very positive staff morale and they feel well supported in their roles. They report the manager to be open and inclusive. She consults with them about admissions and discharges from the home, and makes them feel valued and appreciated, which staff recognise as important to them. The staff team works very well together and reports good levels of communication and consistency.

The manager recognises that, as a new staff team, there are a number of areas for development, particularly in respect of increasing staff knowledge and skill in completing young people's plans and assessments. There is a clear development plan in place to move the home forwards and develop staff skills and ensure that staff undertake the NVQ level 3 course in residential childcare.

All staff have been through a detailed induction process. The manager has identified different ways to engage, educate and train the staff team and ensure that staff are effectively prepared for their roles. Staff spoken to were very positive about induction, training and supervision. As most staff are new to their roles, they have been receiving a high level of supervision to support them to develop and to meet the young people's needs. The training programme in place includes training on equality and diversity, and radicalisation and extremism, as well as a number of other areas, and provides a broad range of general training as well as training specific to the young people in the home.

Multi-agency work is a particular area of strength for this home. Records evidence regular communication with a range of agencies regarding young people. Several agencies were invited to visit the home prior to its opening, and agencies consulted as part of this inspection spoke very positively about the home's partnership working arrangements.

The manager has a good understanding of the progress young people are making. Where young people's progress is not in line with their plans, the manager recognises this and takes action to improve young people's progress or review the suitability of the placement. Although managers are not keen to 'give up' on young people, they do recognise when the home is not meeting their needs. Managers are particularly good at listening to young people's views about their placement and helping young people to share these views with their social worker and advocate.

The manager regularly monitors and carries out quality assurance in the home. She is aiming to delegate some monitoring tasks to lead practitioners in order to further develop them and improve their management skills. Independent monitoring visits take place monthly and reports are submitted to the regulator in good time. The reports are of a good standard and clearly identify areas for improvement and development.

The home's statement of purpose provides clear information about the service provided to young people and how the care given is in line with the stated ethos. Although the home's statement of purpose has been updated, this update has not been provided to the regulator. The statement of purpose provided to the regulator does not provide details of staff qualifications or experience. A requirement is made to reflect this shortfall.

## **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:** 1255520

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

**Registered provider:** Sandcastle Care Ltd

**Registered provider address:** 49 Whitegate Drive, Blackpool, Lancashire FY3 9DG

**Responsible individual:** Joann Snelson

**Registered manager:** Lisa Singleton

## Inspector

Charlie Bamber, social care inspector

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