

SC020151

Registered provider: Country Care Children's Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned. It provides care and accommodation for up to eight young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 22 to 23 November 2017

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

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: 14 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Young people make excellent progress in all areas of their lives.
- The emotional and mental health of young people improves because they receive exceptionally good help from psychotherapists. Therapy is effective because the care practice of staff supports the therapeutic process.
- Young people do very well at school because education provision is personalised to the needs of young people. Creative approaches to education, such as including equine therapy and animal care, help young people to make progress.
- Relationships between young people and staff are very strong. Young people feel confident to confide in staff, especially when they feel unsafe.
- Young people are kept safe by exceptionally strong risk management strategies.
- Staff work hard to prevent young people going missing. If young people go missing, staff take highly effective action to retrieve them and prevent recurrence.
- The staff manage young people's behaviour very well. Incidents of challenging behaviour reduce greatly as young people settle into the routines of the home.
- The manager takes rapid and decisive action in response to concerns over the conduct or behaviour of staff.
- The staff present as motivated and excited in their work. This enthusiasm is fundamental in the relationships that they enjoy with young people.
- Staff receive very good supervision and oversight of their work. Staff practice improves over time because they receive excellent training and development opportunities.
- The manager has developed effective systems to monitor the quality of care. The views of young people and partner agencies are central to these systems.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
26/10/2016	Full	Good
03/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
22/09/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people, who have often experienced a significant amount of trauma and disruption before moving to the home, have made a great deal of progress in all areas of their development. They are considerably safer, and they receive an outstanding level of care from a dedicated staff team. One young person said that staff have 'always stuck by my side, and for that I'm grateful'.

The young people receive excellent support to address their emotional and mental health needs. The staff work in partnership with a psychotherapy service. The contribution of the therapists is excellent. They provide advice to managers and staff on potential new young people coming to live at the home. They also provide training for staff in relation to specific care needs and risk factors for young people. Examples include eating disorders, self-harm and therapeutic approaches to care. Partnership working between psychotherapists, the staff team and the local child and adolescent mental health services ensured that the needs of a new young person received comprehensive assessment prior to her coming to the home. The assessment and transition plan was excellent. Staff received bespoke training and support. This helped the young person make a difficult transition, and become safer. The staff and therapists work together, with very good communication taking place. One therapist said, 'The level of care makes therapy effective.'

The education of young people is a key priority for the manager and staff. Young people attend the outstanding school on site. The school develops highly effective strategies to support young people who find formal education challenging. Young people undertake equine therapy and animal care, alongside their core subjects. This allows therapy and education to be linked. Young people have flourished, becoming more confident. One young person who struggled to communicate now speaks knowledgeably about caring for horses and dogs. This has led to progress in his more formal education, enabling him to take his GCSE exams early. Managers have developed a seamless service incorporating care, education and therapy. A social worker stated, 'The young person is doing well, engaging with therapy, especially equine therapy and therapy dogs. This has helped her tremendously.'

Staff are ambitious for young people. They understand the importance of working at a pace to suit the young person. Individual key-work sessions are excellent, and focus on the things that matter to young people. These topics can cover health, education and relationships. The staff are patient, and persevere over time to develop strong and effective relationships with young people.

The manager and staff have worked hard to help young people to improve and maintain their relationships with their families. For some young people, the arrangements for family visits have improved. Young people now have improved plans that provide clarity over arrangements for family meetings. If young people become anxious or worried about family contact arrangements, the staff provide emotional support and

reassurance.

Care and placement plans are completed to a very high standard, and are regularly updated in line with the changing needs of young people. The young people provide their own views and contribute to care planning decisions. This provides transparency. Young people and staff work together well to achieve their agreed targets.

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

Young people become much safer when they move to the home. This is because staff understand the young people's individual vulnerabilities and take effective action to reduce risks. Detailed risk assessments guide the staff team's practice. Staff discuss the practical implementation of these assessments daily, and they are alert to any worrying signs. Young people are safer because they confide in staff if they are contemplating self-harm. For example, one young person told staff she had hidden away a sharp object with the intention of hurting herself. This is a significant step forward for this young person, and demonstrates a growing trust in the staff.

Young people are allowed to take age-appropriate risks. For example, some young people are allowed to use a social media site without direct supervision. Young people understand how to earn the trust of staff, but important safeguards are always put in place and staff retain the ability to view each young person's social media profile. This approach to managing risk helps to prepare young people for leaving care and having greater autonomy.

The staff take rapid action if a young person leaves the home without authorisation, or goes missing. The staff will search the local area, constantly telephone the young person, contact known associates, liaise with family members, and seek support from the police where appropriate. The staff understand the risks associated with going missing, and work hard to prevent this. On the occasions when a young person has gone missing, the managers and staff have worked effectively with the police to locate and return the young person. Staff do not judge young people following missing episodes, but try to understand the reasons why they went missing. A police officer stated, 'The home is very positive overall, communicate well with the police, and quickly respond to any missing from care episodes.'

The manager reduces the risk of harm to young people by recruiting new staff in accordance with safer recruitment guidance. Before staff work with young people they undergo a rigorous recruitment process. The manager takes robust action when responding to any concerns about the behaviour of staff. The manager follows all agreed procedures and takes the required action to safeguard young people. This manager places the welfare and protection needs of young people first.

Management of young people's behaviour is good. Staff complete good behaviour support plans for each young person. The support plans set out actions that staff should take to prevent and respond to challenging behaviours. This leads to improved behaviour overall. The young people, through therapeutic approaches, are learning to

manage their own behaviour and develop a greater awareness of the thoughts and emotions that give rise to negative behaviours. The staff have had to use physical restraint on some occasions. These interventions have been proportionate to the circumstances, and necessary to keep young people safe. The manager maintains strict oversight of all such interventions to assure herself that there was no other alternative, and to learn valuable lessons.

Staff receive training and development regarding safeguarding practice. This is particularly important in relation to being safe online and internet use. Staff promote the welfare of young people effectively through monitoring internet access, including social media. They manage access that young people have to social media sites and the internet, ensuring that this use is safe and positive. Staff understand the risk to young people of accessing internet sites and social media that may place young people at risk of harm.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

A very effective, dedicated and experienced manager leads this home. She holds a recognised qualification in management. The manager receives an excellent level of support from an experienced deputy manager and senior care staff. Staff report feeling supported and motivated in their work with young people.

Young people enjoy living in a very comfortable home. There is evidence of personalisation throughout, and maintenance is carried out to a very high standard. Young people are fully involved in the decisions made about their home. This ensures that the home is a reflection of the young people. Consequently, they are proud to live in this home.

The staff team is inspirational. The staff are stable, enjoy their work and are absolutely committed to providing young people with the best possible care. One member of staff stated, 'I love it here and really enjoy my job.' Staff benefit from an exceptional range of training, focusing on the needs of young people. This training is based on current research, so staff have access to innovative, fresh approaches. Staff receive very good individual supervision. Robust supervision processes provide staff with the oversight, guidance and encouragement that they need to provide an outstanding level of care.

Excellent communication across the staff team helps to prioritise the safeguarding needs of young people, but also allows staff to recognise, celebrate and reward young people's achievements. Staff are quick to reinforce progress by praising young people consistently.

The manager maintains a strong presence, and has an in-depth understanding of each young person's plans. She has developed excellent relationships with young people, spending time with them, and listening to their views. The manager will challenge other agencies if she feels that they are not prioritising young people's needs, or acting in their best interest.

The manager takes a systematic approach to quality assurance. She utilises monthly reports produced by the independent visitor, information provided by partner agencies, and information provided by young people to good effect. The manager completes her own review of care in which she harnesses all quality assurance information. Areas of potential improvement are quickly addressed. Quality assurance processes support continual improvement.

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: SC020151

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Country Care Children's Homes Limited

Responsible individual: Rachel Dowle

Registered manager: Janine Morrell

Inspector

Phillip Morris, social care inspector

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