

1221357

Registered provider: Hexagon Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is one of a number owned and managed by a private organisation. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four female young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 12 to 13 December 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: 25 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- A stable and enthusiastic staff team cares for young people.
- Positive relationships exist between young people and the staff who care for them. Young people who move on from the home keep in touch with staff, demonstrating the significance of these relationships.

- The home is a warm and welcoming environment where young people enjoy spending their time.
- Staff are imaginative in their approach to caring for young people, which enables them to engage with young people effectively.
- Staff promote positive behaviour and acknowledge young people's achievements.
- Young people are accessing education and thinking about their future.
- Some young people have made a positive and planned transition into independence, with the support of staff in the home.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Young people do not currently have access to a computer.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of record-keeping in the home means that it is not always clear what actions staff have taken and do not give a clear picture of the young person's time in the home.
- Consequences are sometimes given to young people, but not recorded as such, making it difficult for young people to understand and staff to implement.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/01/2017	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that the home's statement of purpose indicates how the home provides individualised care to meet the Quality Standards for the children in their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)
In particular, that the statement regarding the skills and experience of staff is specific to this home.
- Ensure that children have access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning, unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why this would be inappropriate. In such cases, the home should consider whether and how it can support the child to access a computer and the internet safely. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 5.19)
- Ensure that the behaviour management strategy is understood and applied at all times by staff. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.34)
In particular, that any consequences are clear to staff and young people, so that they know why they have been given and when they will end.
- Ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Living here has a positive impact on outcomes for young people. They receive consistent care, clear boundaries and good routines. The staff team is largely stable, which aids consistency. Young people are able to develop positive and trusting relationships with staff, whom they are able to turn to if they are in crisis or need additional support. This is crucial for young people, as they need to feel safe and secure before they can begin to make progress in other areas of their lives. Young people speak positively about living in the home. One commented, 'I just really like it here. It is really good. There are always people around that I can talk to.'

Managers and staff are knowledgeable about the backgrounds and needs of the young people whom they care for. This helps them understand young people's behaviours. Young people are cared for in line with their placement plans and personalised risk assessments. These documents are subject to regular review and are agreed with young people's social workers, so that they remain focused on young people's needs.

Staff try hard to create a homely family atmosphere. They want young people to enjoy ordinary childhood experiences. Staff engage young people in shopping and cooking a meal and they will also watch a DVD, or enjoy a trip to the cinema together. Staff are creative in their approach and always looking at positive ways to engage young people, so that they have happy memories of their time in the home. Staff promote young people's individuality and they support them to attend activities in the community. For example, one person is performing in a play in the local theatre with her drama group, and another attended a zookeeper's course over the summer. Young people enjoy these experiences and are able to learn new skills. As a result, improvements in their self-esteem and confidence are apparent.

Staff promote young people's physical and emotional well-being. They register young people with appropriate health services on their admission to the home and proactively chase appointments with specialist services. They are also skilfully managing one young person's specific medical condition, which requires the young person to eat a special diet. Staff have received specific training in relation to this and consult with the dietician as required. They are alert to the challenges that this brings for young person and ensure that she is still able to participate in daily life by researching what is available and making small adjustments. Consequently, the young person is learning how to manage her own diet and is not missing important social engagements. Similarly, changes to medication recording procedures in the home now demonstrate that medicines are handled safely and young people receive their medicines as prescribed.

Improvements are evident in relation to young people's engagement with education. They are all attending school or college. Staff promote a good work ethic and young people receive encouragement to think about their future career pathways. One young person commented in the Ofsted survey, 'I did not go to school before I came here. I have just done my GCSEs and have now got a place at college.' Similarly, staff help young people to learn the skills they will need when they move on from the home to live independently. A number of young people have successfully made this transition since the last inspection. One young person commented in feedback taken by the home, 'I have had a lot of support with my independence. I could not have asked staff for more support. I have had an amazing time here. I have loved every second.' Significantly, those that have left the home keep in contact with staff, demonstrating the positive impact that these individuals had on the young people while they were living here.

Staff are committed to making a positive difference to young people's lives. They enjoy spending time with young people. However, inconsistent record-keeping means that records do not always reflect the young person's day, as some records contain minimal detail. Furthermore, young people do not currently have access to a computer and the internet within the home. While most young people are able to access the internet on their mobile telephones, a provision within the home would ensure that they are able to access information to support their education, as well as enable staff to engage them in learning how to use the internet safely.

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

Young people living in the home are safe. Staff are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities. They all attend regular update safeguarding training so that they are aware of recent developments or changes. Some staff have also attended specific training on child sexual exploitation and radicalisation, so that they are alert to early indicators of concern. Information gleaned from such training is disseminated to those who have been unable to attend. This promotes young people's safety and welfare.

Young people do sometimes engage in risk-taking behaviour, for example smoking or using drugs. However, staff provide them with information about the risks they place themselves in and encourage them to attend relevant support agencies, such as the smoking cessation clinic. Young people do sometimes go missing from the home. This is usually when they are becoming more independent and they choose to spend time with their friends in the community. On these occasions, staff implement the local missing from care protocols and work in partnership with the police and other safeguarding agencies. Staff remain in contact with young people by mobile telephone when they are not in the home and will try hard to locate them if they are missing, by contacting known associates and by looking for them in the community. Strategy meetings take place if concerns increase and staff ensure that young people benefit from receiving independent return interviews on their return to the home.

Significant improvements are evident in relation to staff recruitment. Thorough pre-employment checks demonstrate that only those who are suitable commence work in the home. Any gaps in employment are explored and appropriate risk assessments underpin any issues identified during the recruitment process. Staff request identification from visitors to the home and ensure that they sign in the visitor's book on arrival. These measures ensure that young people are protected from those who may wish to cause them harm.

Staff are clear about the standards of behaviour that they expect in the home. Respectful relationships are evident between staff and young people, enabling staff to skilfully diffuse the majority of challenging incidents, without the need for physical intervention. Consequently, there has only been one incident since the last inspection. Staff reflect on such incidents at staff meetings, so that they consider any learning for the future.

Staff largely use positive reinforcement and rewards to promote positive behaviour. Young people are able to earn additional pocket money if they achieve their weekly incentives. On rare occasions, staff also sanction poor behaviour. However, not all sanctions have been recorded as such, hence making it difficult to review the effectiveness of the action and leaving the young person unsure about when it will conclude. For example, a discussion at the young people's meeting indicated that one young person was to be permitted limited television viewing, due to poor behaviour. However, it was unclear who was to implement this and for what length of time. Although the sanction may indeed have been appropriate, it was unclear as no detail was evident in the sanction record in the home.

Regular health and safety checks ensure the safety of the premises. Fire evacuation drills take place regularly, including whenever there is a new young person or staff member in the home. This ensures that everyone is familiar with how to exit the building in the event of an emergency.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is a suitably experienced registered manager in charge of the home. She has managed the home since it was registered in June 2016. At the time of this inspection, she was absent from the home. Ofsted has been kept updated in relation to this position and the deputy manager has been in charge during her absence. She has embraced the additional responsibility. Because of their commitment and hard work, significant improvements are evident in relation to the management functions in the home.

Although the home's statement of purpose reflects its aims and objectives, it contains standardised text intended to apply to all of the homes in the organisation. In particular, it refers to the experience and qualifications of staff. However, this is not specific to this home and has the potential to mislead social workers and commissioners. The majority of staff are relatively inexperienced and do not yet have a minimum level 3 qualification. Staff are enthusiastic, committed and work well as a team but this is currently not underpinned by any formal childcare qualification.

Staff say that they feel well supported by managers. They receive regular supervision, which enables them to reflect on their practice. One staff member commented, 'Staff are trusted and valued in this home.' Other comments include, 'We encourage and support each other. We will complete tasks for one another and all work to benefit the children,' and 'I feel listened to and appreciated for the work that I do.' As a result, staff morale is good and they enjoy working in the home.

New staff follow a formal induction programme when they start work in the home, completing a range of core training, such as first aid and food hygiene. Managers use probation processes effectively, to ensure the reliability and competence of those they employ. Staff also have access to a range of further training opportunities that help to ensure a good skill base in the home. Managers are quick to identify courses relevant to the young people in their care. For example, staff have recently attended training on eating disorders and loss and bereavement. This ensures that staff have the skills they need to care effectively for young people. It also helps to develop and motivate them.

Liaison with other agencies is effective. Relationships between managers and other professionals are good. One social worker commented, 'Communication from staff is good; they keep me up to date and send me a helpful weekly progress report.' Another commented, 'They are good at communication and in managing risk.' Managers will also challenge local authorities to take additional action when required.

Managers know the young people well and are committed to them. They are able to demonstrate the progress that young people have made since moving into the home.

Improvements in monitoring by managers since the last inspection help to ensure that issues are not overlooked. Managers have taken appropriate action to ensure the fulfilment of the six requirements and two recommendations made at the last inspection. In total, only four recommendations are raised at this inspection, signifying the progress the home has made since the last inspection.

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: 1221357

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hexagon Care Services Limited

Registered provider address: Hexagon Care, 1 Tustin Court, Port Way, Ashton-On-Ribble, Preston, Lancashire PR2 2YQ

Responsible individual: Jeanette Swift

Registered manager: Zahra Gibrail

Inspector

Mandy Williams, social care inspector

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