

1159755

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides periods of residential care for up to four girls, aged between 12 and 17 years, who are at risk in their communities. This may, for example, be due to the risk of child sexual exploitation, gang affiliation, trafficking or a combination of these risk factors.

The manager was registered in November 2017.

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 May 2018

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

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

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: 11 July 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/07/2017	Full	Good
16/11/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
06/06/2016	Full	Good
12/01/2016	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that staff encourage positive behaviour through the use of positive behaviour strategies ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.13). This particularly relates to the overuse of sanctions.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people benefit from highly personalised and nurturing care that enables them to make significant and positive changes in their lives. They enjoy a diverse range of outstanding experiences that increases their confidence and skills. For example, young people have been involved in co-producing a professional video, meeting a government minister and talking about exploitation on the national news. One social worker said, 'I love it that they are giving her such exceptional opportunities.'

Staff care for young people as a good parent would. They talk openly and candidly with young people and protect them with determination and tenacity. The key workers of young people ensure that they are working on young people's birthdays in order to have contact and celebrate this event with them. Young people recognise this, and one summarised it, 'They care. They put my needs before theirs.'

Social workers recognise the highly effective relationships that staff have with birth families. One said, 'They work really well with her mum who isn't easy.' This helps maintain lifelong and, for some young people, fragile relationships, and in some cases restores them. For example, one young person said, 'I hadn't seen my brother for two years, but they got on it and I see him regularly now.'

Young people make excellent progress in educational attendance and achievement, even when they had not attended education for some months prior to their arrival at the home. Staff quickly ensure that young people are in receipt of some level of daily educational input, supported by personalised but firm routines. Some young people initially resist having more structure in their lives, but staff are highly effective at encouraging and re-establishing essential and normal routines.

Not long after young people are admitted to the home, the organisation's headteacher is involved in assessing the young people's skills and abilities. This means that young

people do not have to wait for a suitable resource before receiving educational input. The local education coordinator commented, 'They have been great at supporting her virtual learning.'

Young people make exceptional progress in maintaining good health. Some benefit from professional input regarding their sexual health or substance misuse. All have a wide range of opportunities to improve their emotional well-being. The availability of these resources has, for example, helped a young person to refrain from self-harm for three months. Her social worker said, 'She used to self-harm every day, ingesting glass and all sorts... They are doing a brilliant job.'

Another area of excellent practice is the value placed on listening to the views of young people. One example of this is that young people have had professional help to devise a realistic video about life in the home, which is shown to all potential new staff when attending for interview. This is an exceptional piece of work, which has not only benefited the young people who took part, but significantly offers potential new staff a realistic insight into the challenges and rewards of working in this home.

Staff have also effectively facilitated young peoples' voices being heard by a wider and influential audience. Young people have spoken with the minister for crime prevention, and subsequently one young person shared her experiences on the national news. Young people have also spoken with officials from the Department of Education, and at a national conference.

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

Young people living in this home are placed because they need high levels of safeguarding support to protect them from significant harm. Staff work with young people to jointly devise a risk plan. These are highly effective in significantly reducing dangerous behaviours. One young person said in relation to self-harm, 'Other homes left me to it, and just patched me up or restrained me. Here they stick by me, and they won't leave me.'

On admission, most young people pose a major threat to their own safety because of regular episodes of going missing from care. However, for those young people who have been in the home for some months, missing episodes have significantly reduced. One social worker reported, 'They have changed her thought processes. No running away for four months and she thinks about the future now.' The tenacious and persistent practice of staff has had a huge influence on this risk reduction. A young person said, 'She followed me [when missing] for four hours. I couldn't believe it.'

This can be a volatile home, but, in most incidents, staff's understanding of young people quickly restores harmony. The de-escalation of problematic situations is the preferred method of dealing with conflict. Young people are actively involved in finding appropriate ways to deal with difficult situations. As a social worker commented, 'They are very child

focused. They get “[X] to know exactly how she is feeling, and they can calm her down.’

On rare occasions staff, will use restraint to urgently keep young people safe. These interventions are thoroughly considered and recorded appropriately. All young people experience and describe the home as a place where they are safe and well cared for.

Staff have exceptional knowledge and understanding of how to safeguard young people. The registered manager is aware of and interested in research-informed practice such as contextual safeguarding. This has been discussed with staff at a team meeting. Staff also demonstrate outstanding practice at working well with others to safeguard young people, for example installing external safety cameras and working with the police on issuing restrictive notices to persons outside of the home who pose a risk of harm to young people.

Recently, there has been staff discussion, which has resulted in some changes to how sanctions are applied. This approach is still not entirely clear among some staff, and therefore there is a risk that the use of some sanctions may undermine the positive behaviour emphasis of the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager has been in post for six months and was previously the deputy manager. She has done an excellent job in building on the strong legacy left by the previous manager, who had successfully run the home since it was opened. The current registered manager anticipates completing her level 5 qualification within appropriate timescales.

The registered manager is highly ambitious to promote excellent practice. She believes that her home is one of the services in the area of child sexual exploitation that is at the forefront of practice. As such, she welcomes the scrutiny of others including government officials and formal evaluation by academic bodies. The registered manager prioritises involving young people in this scrutiny, and this gives them unparalleled opportunities to tell their stories to an influential audience and influence developments in the sector.

The registered manager has excellent oversight of the progress that young people make. Crucially, she has highly valued one-to-one time with each young person on a weekly basis. As one young person said, “[L] is always on it. She pushes them to trust me with a phone and get a proper education.’

Supervision practice is effective in equipping staff to carry out their complex task to a high level. Sessions are regular and provide an effective mix of challenge and support.

The training of staff is a further strength in this home. New staff receive a comprehensive induction and training package, and staff practice is firmly underpinned by training on social pedagogy and attachment theory. There is agile use of core

training. For example, the increased risk in the home because of young people's smoking habits led to all staff and young people having further fire awareness training.

The registered manager has an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of her home. She has a strategic plan focusing on small but critical changes to the recruitment and interview processes, working conditions and staff care. The whole package strongly involves young people and will be closely monitored for its impact.

It is notable that all the external professionals who were spoken with as part of this inspection are united in their praise for the registered manager. They describe her as 'excellent' and 'a strong communicator'. Social workers are also very satisfied with routine communications from the home. One said, 'Communications are fantastic'... It's brilliant. I know exactly what is happening with [young person].

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: 1159755

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Registered provider address: St Christopher's Fellowship, 1 Putney High Street,
London SW15 1SZ

Responsible individual: Philip Townsend

Registered manager: Laverne Cole

Inspector

Bridget Goddard, social care inspector

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