

1263120

Registered provider: Apex Children's Services

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private company. The home provides care and support for up to four young people who, for a variety of reasons, are not able to live at home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 1 November 2018

Inspection dates: 1 to 2 May 2019

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: 19 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/02/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/04/2018	Full	Good
17/01/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

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>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff—</p> <p>understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers;</p> <p>help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment;</p> <p>promote opportunities for each child to learn informally;</p> <p>maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training and to maximise the child's achievement. (Regulation 8 (1)(2)(a)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii))</p>	21/06/2019
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that records of any concerns including incidents of missing from care and risk assessment are sufficiently detailed.</p>	21/06/2019

Recommendations

- Records must be kept of the administration of all medication, which includes occasions where prescribed medication is refused. Where the home has questions or concerns about a child's medication, they should approach an expert such as a General Medical Practitioner. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- Case records must be kept up-to-date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. The home's records represent a significant contribution to their life history. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4 and 14.5) In particular, ensure that records such as accident and medical records, individual worker sessions and care plans tell the story of the child's journey.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people live in a caring and nurturing environment in which they receive personalised care and support that brings stability to their lives. They receive the help that they need to recover from trauma and harmful experiences and to grow and flourish. A social worker acknowledged that their young person continues to make steady and sustained progress because of the support that they receive.

Young people feel safe enough to trust staff and accept their help and support. The staff are skilled at building warm, consistent and positive relationships with young people. They show young people that they care about them and know what is important to them. Staff listen carefully to what young people have to say and help them to be involved in the decisions about their lives. Young people said that the staff are 'great'.

Careful care planning means that young people have the support that they need to move to the next stage in their lives. Staff have a good understanding of each young person's needs, but this is not always reflected in young people's records.

Young people are in education, but this is for far fewer hours than the recommended 25 hours per week. The staff make efforts to get young people up when they are not in school, but they do not have cohesive plans as to what young people should do on the

days when they are not in education. There has been some challenge to placing authorities and the virtual head, which resulted in one young person securing a place at the school of their choice. However, this is not as effective for all young people.

Young people enjoy a wide range of activities, including horse riding. Participating in such activities has significantly enhanced young people's confidence and self-esteem. Young people said that they have a say in what they want to do and spoke enthusiastically about a visit to a trampoline centre.

Staff are good at helping young people to sustain and rebuild their relationships with their families and other people who are important to them. They support young people to spend time with their parents, brothers and sisters and relatives, in line with their agreed plan. Staff work sensitively with families to make sure that spending time together is a safe and positive experience for young people.

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

The manager and staff have created a safe home environment that protects young people from harm. Young people feel safe and have a strong sense of belonging. They know that they can talk to staff about their worries and that the staff will help them to be safe. Young people are now safer from the risks of abuse, exploitation, self-harm, and going missing from home.

The manager and staff can recognise when young people may be at risk of harm. When staff have concerns about young people's safety, they take prompt and effective action in line with safeguarding guidance. However, the records of safeguarding incidents are not always recorded well and can be open to interpretation. This is then reflected in some risk assessments that lack clarity and direction for the staff. However, the impact of this is reduced as the staff clearly know and understand the vulnerabilities of each young person and the support that they need.

Staff help young people to be aware of risks and to manage their safety at home and also while in the community and at school. Young people spoke confidently about a range of subjects, including knife crime and county lines. They said that they could seek help from staff and other trusted adults when they are concerned about themselves or other young people.

Staff are inventive in helping young people to stay safe; for example, they use news items to discuss and learn about current issues, as well as the home's newsletter, which discusses different topics with links for young people to access to learn more. As a result, young people are becoming much more aware of their safety when using the internet and social media.

Young people are increasingly able to manage their emotions and moderate their behaviour. A young person described an incident where they could have easily become involved in a conflict with another young person, but they did not and were able to walk away. They are proud of the way they managed their feelings by taking a positive

approach.

The staff understand how young people's early experiences and trauma affect their emotional development, relationships and behaviour. Staff provide young people with warm and reliable adult relationships and routines that they need to feel safe and to recover.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A qualified, enthusiastic and committed registered manager leads and manages the home. She is supported well by her two deputy managers. Together they have created a nurturing and positive environment that is improving the lives of young people.

Leaders and managers use thorough and evaluative monitoring systems to understand the quality of care that young people receive. The manager has spoken to the independent person regarding the timeliness of their reports and has requested that these provide greater insight into the independent person's discussions with young people. The manager takes effective action to make the necessary improvements that benefit young people.

The manager is aware of the areas of development for the home. This includes introducing a new impact risk assessment format. This is to improve the recording and analysis of the reasons for admitting a new young person to the home while remaining mindful of the existing young people and their needs.

Effective staffing arrangements ensure that there are always enough suitable, experienced, well-trained and qualified staff available to meet the young people's needs. The staff work together cohesively, and the day-to-day care of young people provides them with good levels of support and supervision.

Records are generally well maintained and are current. However, several are not signed or dated by the author; this does not promote transparency. The records of individual work sessions with young people are bland. They do not give any substance to the conversations that are held with young people. Neither do they offer any indication of the impact the sessions have, or any description of any further action that is needed to support young people towards their goals.

Several records, such as visits to the hospital accident and emergency department and the GP, missing-from-care and incident records, lack sufficient detail to explain the circumstances involved. Some records are incomplete and others contain conflicting information. One missing-from-care record said that the young person 'appeared to be under the influence... but is generally ok'. Ultimately, this does not contribute to the young people's life history or demonstrate what the staff have done to support the young person.

Staff are provided with good levels of individual support and practice-based supervision. Team meetings are used to discuss a variety of topics, such as the effect of child

criminal exploitation, and to reflect on the care and support provided to young people and how they can improve this.

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: 1263120

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Apex Children's Services

Registered provider address: 6 Tower Quays, Tower Road, Birkenhead, Cheshire CH41 1BP

Responsible individual: Barry Henry

Registered manager: Jennifer Savage

Inspector

Chris Scully, social care inspector

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