

SC044259

Registered provider: Child First Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a private organisation. It is registered to accommodate up to five young people, irrespective of gender, who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and who are unable, for the moment, to live in a family setting. The home aims to support young people to return to family, move to foster carers or to move on to independent accommodation.

Inspection dates: 12 to 13 September 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 10 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Staff have a thorough understanding of young people's background

circumstances and associated needs. They develop positive, trusting relationships with the young people.

- The emotional well-being and mental health of young people is prioritised, and staff work effectively with other professionals to ensure that effective support is provided.
- Young people receive high-quality support to help them engage more positively with their education provision.
- Staff take a flexible and effective approach to promoting positive behaviour.
- Young people are consistently treated with dignity and respect. Their views are valued and staff support them to develop their individuality.
- Positive peer relationships are promoted, and young people are given the support and guidance needed to resolve conflict.
- Leaders and managers have developed an effective working partnership with the police.
- Staff benefit from being able to discuss and reflect on their practice with the organisation's clinical psychologist.
- Many young people make significant progress in learning greater independent living skills.
- There is a detailed development plan which is an effective tool for promoting continuous improvement to the quality of care being delivered.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Leaders and managers should ensure that practice relating to keeping young people safe and protecting them from harm is of a consistently high standard.
- There needs to be a greater awareness of safe recruitment procedures and these need to become embedded in practice.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
27/09/2016	Full	Good
16/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
28/07/2015	Full	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>In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure:</p> <p>(2)(a)(i) that staff 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;</p> <p>(2)(a)(ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>(2)(a)(vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (2)(a)(i)(ii)(vi))</p> <p>This is with specific reference to the assessment and management of risk, ensuring that children know the risks associated with internet use and the misuse of drugs and alcohol and that staff escalate concerns regarding children who persistently go missing.</p>	30/10/2017
<p>In order to meet the care planning standard the registered person should ensure that children:</p> <p>(1)(a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.</p> <p>(Regulation 14 (1)(a))</p> <p>This is with specific reference to assessing the likely impact of children moving into the home, prior to them being admitted.</p>	30/10/2017
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>(Regulation 31(1))</p> <p>Specifically, where necessary, ensure that risk assessments are undertaken as part of the staff recruitment process.</p>	30/10/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that where appropriate, staff seek expert advice from education professionals, such as the Virtual School Head. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 27, paragraph 5.11)

- Ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to meet their training needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11).
Specifically, ensure that all staff complete training in relation to the recognition and prevention of child sexual exploitation, in a timely manner.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Managers and staff have a comprehensive understanding of young people's background circumstances and their associated needs and vulnerabilities. They work hard to develop positive, trusting relationships with young people and, in the majority of cases, they achieve this. As a result, most young people make good progress across many aspects of their lives. For example, one young person has surpassed expectations in terms of life skills, independence and managing anger and frustration.

There have been some exceptions in terms of sustained good progress. Not all young people have been able to reduce the severity of their challenging behaviour and aggression, and, in one case, a social worker expressed the view that the young person had increased the level of unsafe behaviours since being admitted to the home.

Most young people make significant progress in terms of engagement with their educational provision, despite having previous negative experiences in school. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting young people's education. This has included staff remaining with a young person at school, to help resolve any challenges that the young person may face during lessons. The registered manager and staff communicate effectively with education professionals, but this has not included consultation with the virtual headteacher for children looked after.

Young people receive effective guidance on building positive relationships with their peers. This has resulted in some young people gaining greater insight into how their behaviours can damage relationships. Young people spoken to during this inspection said that generally, the group currently gets on well together, although this had not always been the case. They expressed confidence in the ability of staff to intervene before peer relationships deteriorate to the point of conflict.

The health needs of young people are recognised and acted upon. A healthy lifestyle is promoted, and young people take an active role in choosing a balanced diet. The mental health and emotional well-being of young people is given high priority. Highly effective planning and well-developed strategies were implemented to meet the needs of one young person. In other cases, the registered manager has assessed the emotional needs of young people and made clear recommendations regarding the most appropriate therapeutic intervention to support the young person's emotional well-being.

Staff actively encourage young people to express their views and engage in decision-

making processes. This includes promoting local advocacy services and ensuring that young people are familiar with the home's complaints procedure. A creative approach has been taken to ensuring that young people's house meetings are positive events which encourage young people to engage in debate. One example is the use of videos to stimulate discussion on issues such as keeping safe in the community. Individual key-work sessions provide young people with the opportunity to discuss personal issues, and are usually focused on the young person's particular needs. However, in one case, although staff were making determined efforts to engage with a young person to reduce his distress, key-work sessions could have been more keenly focused on the most concerning presenting issues relating to the young person's safety.

Young people are consistently treated with dignity and respect. Staff offer advice and guidance on a range of issues, such as personal development, in a sensitive manner which puts young people at ease. Young people are encouraged and supported to assert their individuality, and make links with other young people and community groups with shared values and interests. This sensitive approach to meeting young people's needs is evident from the point at which young people are admitted to the home. One young person, who has lived at the home for only a few weeks, said, 'I have settled in so well it feels like I've been here for five or six months.'

Young people have the opportunity to try new activities and develop their personal interests. For many young people, this has meant taking up a new sporting activity or developing their skills in practical tasks such as cookery. Young people spoke positively about a summer holiday they had taken with staff at a popular seaside resort.

Young people generally make good progress in developing their independent living skills. This is a result of good planning, taking into account the young person's age and abilities. Young people engage well in independent living programmes, and some have made significant progress despite facing a number of personal challenges and setbacks. This has meant that some young people have left the home with increased knowledge and practical skills that will benefit them as they move into adulthood.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The standard of practice in relation to safeguarding young people and protecting them from harm has been variable. The assessment and management of risk for one young person has been poor, particularly in relation to going missing from the home. The written risk assessment was not consistent with an explanation given by staff about when they report a missing episode to the police. On one occasion, staff did not follow the strategies specified in the risk assessment, in relation to when a young person should be reported missing.

In other cases, the assessment and management of risk has been good, particularly in relation to young people's mental health difficulties and associated behaviours. There are not widespread failures in risk management, but there has been inconsistency in the

standard of practice.

In one case, there has been a failure to escalate concerns and ensure that relevant professionals take prompt action in response to a young person's frequent episodes of going missing. At the time of this inspection, professionals' meetings to discuss the concerns had been timetabled, but these are several weeks after it became evident that the risk level has significantly increased.

This case is an exception, and is not indicative of sustained poor practice. The police missing person's liaison officer confirmed that there have been a number of examples where staff have taken a proactive approach to reduce young people's episodes of going missing. In many cases, managers and staff have made a major contribution to multi-agency safety planning in relation to highly vulnerable young people.

There has been some inconsistency regarding the actions taken when young people are thought to be at risk of harm. In one case, there has not been a timely response to indicators of increased substance and alcohol misuse and greater vulnerability to exploitation. In addition, insufficient work has been undertaken to ensure that a young person has the knowledge and skills to keep safe when accessing online social media sites. Plans are being made to address these issues, but this is a further example of delay in delivering specific interventions to keep young people safe.

The organisation's recruitment procedure has not consistently ensured that all steps are taken to minimise the potential for unsuitable adults to become employed in the home. Senior managers have not always undertaken risk assessments regarding an applicant's suitability to work when information gleaned warranted this. Records have not been kept of the manager's decision-making process.

Young people spoken to during the inspection said that they generally feel safe in the home, although one young person made a reference to a confrontational situation with a former peer that had been frightening. Managers and staff react promptly to any signs of bullying or discrimination and provide effective support to victims and perpetrators of bullying behaviour. In recent months, relationships between the young people have improved significantly.

There are effective systems for promoting positive behaviour. Staff are creative in refining young people's individual behaviour management plans. This increases the potential for young people to manage negative behaviours more effectively. The use of physical interventions to manage young people's challenging behaviour is kept to a minimum, and only occurs in accordance with regulatory guidelines. Incidents of physical restraint are recorded in detail, and the registered manager closely monitors standards in this area of practice.

Staff are familiar with the procedures to follow should they become aware of a child protection concern. Consequently, information is quickly shared with the relevant safeguarding professionals. The registered manager has ensured that staff work in partnership with agencies involved in the protection of young people, and, in some

cases, this has resulted in external professionals having a greater understanding of young people's vulnerabilities.

The attention paid to health and safety matters ensures that the young people live in a physically safe environment. At the time of this inspection, there had been a delay in contractors repairing the home's faulty fire alarm. Additional smoke detectors had been located in the area of the fault, and the registered manager took action during the inspection to ensure that a date was confirmed for the repairs to take place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home has an experienced registered manager. She is currently studying for the level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare, and anticipates completing the course successfully in October 2017. She is supported by a suitably experienced deputy manager and there is a stable team of residential care staff.

There are established systems in place for monitoring the quality of care being provided. The registered manager's monitoring of serious incidents is particularly strong, and clearly identifies where improvements to staff practice could be made. This promotes a culture of reflective practice, where staff routinely consider how things could have been done differently to achieve a more positive outcome. Areas of weakness identified through the home's monitoring systems are addressed in the home's development plan, which is an effective tool for promoting continuous improvement in the standards of care being delivered.

On one occasion, monitoring systems failed to identify that the home's admission procedure had not been followed. Prior to admission, no assessment was undertaken of the likely impact that a young person's needs and behaviours would have on the existing group of young people. Similarly, consideration was not given to how the behaviours and group dynamics could affect the young person being admitted. As a result, no planning had taken place on how challenging situations, that could have been anticipated, would be responded to. In other cases, the admission process was thorough and well planned.

Leaders and managers are positive role models and promote a culture in which staff have high aspirations for the young people. This is reflected in young people's individual plans. Records are kept of the progress that young people make, and the information is used to amend or develop alternative strategies for meeting young people's needs.

Staff spoken to during the inspection said that they are well supported, and feel able to openly discuss any concerns that they may have. Staff particularly welcome the opportunity to discuss their practice, and how best to meet the emotional needs of the young people, with the organisation's clinical psychologist. There is a strong commitment to promoting the professional development of staff through regular supervision and a range of practice-based training. Supervision records indicate that staff are given clear guidance and support to meet the standards of practice expected.

Senior managers have recently found an alternative training provider for some courses, after assessing that the training and support being provided was not sufficient to meet the needs of the staff team. This has ensured that staff benefit from the learning opportunities that they are given. The registered manager has been proactive in ensuring that the training courses provided are relevant to the particular needs of young people at the home. Some minor shortfalls were identified in terms of numbers of staff completing the organisation's training on child sexual exploitation.

The registered manager engages positively with the local community and has established good communication with nearby neighbours. Consequently, any emerging concerns in relation to community relationships are dealt with efficiently. Links have been built with local leisure and youth support services, and this encourages young people to play a more active role in community life.

The home provides a comfortable, homely living space and clearly reflects the preferences and personalities of the young people who are resident. There is a good range of games and other recreational equipment which helps make the home a young-person-centred environment.

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: SC044259

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Child First Limited

Registered provider address: c/o 40 Oxford Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 1UT

Responsible individual: Johanna Davys Havard

Registered manager: Michelle Wright

Inspector

Stephen Collett, social care inspector

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