

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	25 May 2016
Unique reference number	SC438764
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Potton Homes Ltd
Registered provider address	9 Brookway, London SE3 9BJ

Responsible individual	Susan Potton
Registered manager	Emma Brady
Inspector	Fiona Littlefield

Inspection date	25 May 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC438764

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people make progress in all areas of their development. They receive highly personalised care from staff who demonstrate sensitivity and humour, and a commitment to developing supportive relationships with them.
- Admission procedures are robust. Staff and managers develop detailed and effective risk assessments for each young person, and match these with strategies so that young people remain safe.
- Each young person has a daily routine. School and care staff work together to ensure that young people follow this consistently. Consequently, young people know what is expected of them and learn to accept a structured schedule.
- All young people receive full-time education which is tailored to their needs. Programmes include academic study, time spent in alternative provision and work experience. Teaching is effective and creative, and young people have sustained progress in mathematics and English.
- Young people are encouraged to take part in activities which interest them in the community, including sports and leisure pastimes. They develop social skills and confidence in their ability to interact in social situations.
- Staff are highly nurturing and work to a model of positive parenting that helps young people to make secure relationships. Young people learn to reflect on the impact of their behaviour on those around them and to reduce negative incidents.
- This inspection identifies some areas for improvement. These are in relation to managerial oversight, and shortfalls in case-work files and integrating systems that record incidents in the home. These matters are not currently having an impact on the safety and well-being of young people.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and '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>13: The leadership and management standard:</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference to young people's case records having to make a clear indication of the young person's progress, the registered provider must ensure that they—</p> <p>(2)(f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</p> <p>(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p>	<p>29 July 2016</p>

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home provides long-term and task-centred care to a maximum of six male or female young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This is one of two residential services operated by this privately run organisation, in addition to a school adjacent to this home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23 March 2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
30 June 2015	Full	Good
9 October 2014	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25 June 2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Good</p>
<p>Young people make progress because they are cared for by staff and managers who know their needs and vulnerabilities very well, and develop warm and caring relationships with them. Some young people can demonstrate very challenging behaviour, but staff are insightful and understand that this often reflects a young person's past traumas and levels of anxiety. One young person said: 'I don't know why I have stayed, but I have the best key team in the world.'</p> <p>Each young person has an individual programme which details their day-to-day routines alongside their educational programme and chosen activities. Some young people are not accustomed to such a structured programme, but staff are skilled in developing relationships and encouraging them to persist. One member of staff said: 'Our role is to make them feel special, and regular routines are part of the whole therapeutic approach.' Interaction is intense, but also warm and playful. Young people understand what is expected of them, and this helps them to feel secure and confident.</p> <p>Education is a key element in helping young people to regain their self-esteem. All young people are assessed in the school attached to the home when they first come. This leads to an individualised work programme that addresses their particular needs and any specific gaps in their knowledge. Programmes can be a combination of periods of academic study and attendance at alternative learning projects. Some young people have excelled in work experience. Teaching staff are committed to the idea that all young people should meet their full potential and must be able to function confidently in the outside world. All young people have passed functional level exams in mathematics, and most in English. This greatly enhances their confidence and ability to communicate effectively. One young person told a member of staff that 'that she would like to live in school, where she feels safe.'</p> <p>In addition, young people are being prepared for adulthood. Some have attained places on college courses which can lead to a career as they reach adulthood. They develop their personal and domestic routines, such as cooking, budgeting and using public transport. This is striking progress, given their starting points, and reflects their growing confidence and sense of optimism about the future.</p> <p>Young people are encouraged to take an interest in the world around them. Teaching staff are imaginative in introducing them to subjects such as the law,</p>	

different cultures, radicalisation and how to manage safe relationships. In addition, teaching and care staff work closely together to enhance young people's interpersonal skills. Care staff will practice reading with young people after school, and young people are encouraged to develop their tolerance of each other and to develop friendships. Young people know that they have made progress. One young person said: 'Of course I do find staff annoying, but I have to admit they have been very helpful.'

Young people choose from a wide variety of activities which exploit their talents, get them out into the community or simply provide an opportunity to spend time with a member of staff in relaxed way. Some young people attend the sea cadets, or go to the gym or swimming. Others have singing lessons and have taken part in national talent competitions. Some staff may simply take a young person out for a coffee or a walk into town. As a result, young people learn to feel confident and relaxed out in the community.

Many young people are placed at some distance from their families and communities. Staff recognise that this is very hard for them and that those relationships need to be supported. Staff and managers are proactive in arranging contact and keeping in touch with family members regularly. The mother of one young person said: 'They keep in touch with me and are very reassuring. He knows that they really love him and they really look after him.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>Young people feel safe and are safe. Many come to the home with a history of complex needs. The response from staff is purposeful and confident so, when young people raise concerns or complaints, these are dealt with immediately. Young people are not always satisfied with the outcome, but they are aware that staff will take their issues seriously and will respond consistently. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They are clear that they would know how to respond to a child protection concern. The management team liaises promptly with the local safeguarding team concerning any allegations to ensure that any concerns are dealt with firmly. As a result, young people are safeguarded in the home.</p> <p>Staff and managers plan carefully for any new admission, liaising with placing authorities and ensuring that they receive all appropriate background documentation. Assessments are detailed and risks are balanced with management strategies, so that the young person is secure as soon as they join the home. All young people have an allocated key worker who is involved in the early planning and who makes sure that they have someone who they can turn to. In addition, each newcomer has a mentor from among the current group of young people. This core activity lies at the heart of how staff are able to settle young people in the</p>	

home. Staff work as a team. For instance, risk assessments are regularly updated and shared with the staff group in weekly meetings. As a result, they know the young people extremely well and their self-esteem benefits. One social worker said: 'Staff had to get the measure of her, but they took every incident very seriously and learnt from their experience. This is important, as one of her worries is that she will not be believed.'

Staff and managers feel strongly that all young people need to have hope for the future, to be able to manage their emotions and to reduce negative incidents. Consequently, there is an emphasis on celebrating achievements and rewarding good behaviour, rather than on using sanctions as a way of modifying behaviour. Episodes of young people going missing are extremely rare. However, there can be periods when young people's behaviour can be volatile. Managers monitor changes carefully to identify trends and develop strategies to drive improvement. They discuss these in monthly staff meetings and raise issues in residents meetings. This cycle of sharing information is important for young people, who learn to reflect on their behaviour and understand the impact on those around them. For instance, bullying is addressed in every residents meeting, where the majority of negative incidents are discussed, and usually resolved through restorative work. Over time, young people learn that they can sort out their conflicts through discussion, and this helps their confidence.

Recruitment procedures are effective. The registered manager follows up applications personally to ensure that applicants have the necessary aptitude and experience to be able to work with young people in the home. As a result, young people benefit from being looked after by staff who are prepared for the demands and rewards of working with young people with challenging behaviour.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>Senior managers in the company place a high value on the professional development of all staff. The registered manager has been qualified at national vocational qualification level 4 for nearly six years and has significant experience in this field. The management team has recently been strengthened with the addition of a deputy manager and two deputising seniors. Experienced staff are currently taking the national vocational qualification at level 5. Residential staff are either already qualified to level 3 or have enrolled on the training. Consequently, young people benefit from being looked after by staff who are both committed and willing to learn about their practice.</p> <p>All staff receive regular recorded supervision from a senior worker. In addition, they attend regular shift handovers, weekly staff meetings and monthly consultations with a consultant psychiatrist. As a result, they know that they can</p>	

rely on one another for support. Young people make progress, because they are looked after by staff who are valued by their managers and can therefore offer consistent, confident care. One member of staff said: 'I feel so supported. I've learnt to de-escalate situations. Debriefings are important, as they help you to come back afresh.'

The management team provides and monitors a training programme throughout the year so that staff are equipped with both routine and specialist skills to ensure that the physical and emotional needs of young people are met. For instance, if a young person has specific medical needs, the whole staff team is trained in the procedure, and clear protocols are devised and reviewed regularly. In addition, managers will liaise with local medical professionals who can offer extra training for a specific condition. Young people feel secure, because staff know what to do in an emergency.

The management team regularly reviews the quality of care in the home. It reviews negative incidents and direct feedback from young people, their families and the professionals who work with them. It reviews complaints and comments from partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors. It comments on the success of admissions and assesses the quality of transitions for young people who have moved on from the home. The managers are a highly committed and energetic team and place the needs of traumatised young people at the centre of their practice.

The registered manager has fully addressed the recommendation of the previous inspection concerning the recording of missing from home interviews. However, the quality of records held in young people's files has not improved sufficiently. There are gaps and conflicting information in case notes, and the systems that record negative incidents are not properly integrated. Managers have not reviewed these records adequately and, as a result, their oversight of young people's progress or outcomes is not robust. Despite these shortfalls, there is no indication that any young person has been adversely affected. The manager has acknowledged that this situation needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency so that documentation is systematically compiled and reviewed, and accurately reflects the progress of young people.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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