

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	[REDACTED]
Inspector	Maire Atherton
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Calcot Services for Children Limited
Registered person address	200 Brook Drive Green Park READING RG2 6UB

Responsible individual	Harvinder Singh
Registered manager	Sylvia Mahoney Nzeh / Sarah Walton
Date of last inspection	07/01/2014

Inspection date	13/11/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	outstanding
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The young people benefit from personalised care tailored to meet their individual needs, with safeguarding figuring prominently, that supports them to make good progress. This is provided by a well led, supported and committed staff team and informed by detailed placement plans. Staff are consistently concerned with the welfare of the young people and have created a caring and nurturing environment. Staff are committed to the young people and work to establish and maintain positive relationships through some testing times.

The management have developed very effective relationships with a range of partner agencies. They describe communication with the home as effective and professional. They also say that staff 'maintain the focus on young people' and there is 'continued engagement and working together to safeguard young people'.

The shortfalls identified do not immediately impact negatively on young people. There is no separate provision of sleeping accommodation for staff and not all records are stored with the same level of security. Records do not demonstrate how young people are helped to understand why on occasion their significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon. Lone working risk assessments are not individualised.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned by an established company. The home is registered to accommodate a maximum of three young people who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. A therapeutic approach is taken in working with children and young people with the aim of enabling them to return to their family home or to an alternative family placement.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/01/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
06/08/2013	Full	outstanding
21/01/2013	Interim	good progress
09/10/2012	Full	good

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
31 (2001)	provide, for person's working at the home, sleeping accommodation where the provision of such accommodation is needed in connection with their work at the home (Regulation 31 (10)(b))	31/01/2015
28 (2001)	ensure all children's case records are kept securely in the children's home (Regulation 28 (3)(a))	31/12/2014

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- provide written evidence to demonstrate how young people are helped to understand why significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon (NMS1.2)
- carry out and record in writing individualised risk assessments where only one member of staff is on duty at any time, identifying any likely risks to children, staff and members of the public (NMS 17.9)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people thrive during their time at the home and make good progress from their starting points, although they do not always recognise this for themselves. A significant achievement for the young people is maintaining a stable placement. A professional commented 'They were very nurturing, they didn't try and make her conform, there was no spiralling out of control'. Another said 'She hasn't tried to sabotage the placement, this is amazing'. Social workers reflect on the growing maturity of young people as they learn to manage compromise. One commented 'I can see significant progress and she is engaging better in work which hasn't happened before'.

Young people are healthy but are selective about the health appointments they will attend. They know what a healthy lifestyle looks like and again choose which elements of this they will adopt. They are well versed on the consequences of substance misuse but do not always heed the warnings. Young people contribute to the varied and nutritious menus which reflect the cultures of the young people placed and also introduce them to new culinary experiences from around the world.

Young people and professionals agree that re-engagement in education is an immense personal achievement. One professional said 'They managed to engage her in education after a year out of the system'. One young person said 'A real benefit of being here is that I have started college and am doing well'. Young people are encouraged to celebrate and be proud of their achievements, and staff compile a record to remind them of these.

Young people have a voice in the home and their views are incorporated into their individual placement plans and the development plans for the home. Young people have regular opportunities to contribute to the wider community, undertaking voluntary work for example. Some use the opportunities to gain experience and enhance their curriculum vitae.

Young people, subject to any agreed restrictions, are well supported, both practically and emotionally to maintain contact with their family and significant others.

Young people moving on to semi-independent living accommodation leave with a good understanding of what this will mean for them. They have a good awareness of their strengths and the areas of that they need to learn, underpinned by working through recognised schemes. A professional commented 'She is now independent in seeking help and managing travel, significant progress'.

Quality of care

good

In the main young people enjoy positive relationships with each other and with staff. Staff manage any tensions that arise between young people well, with open and frank discussion leading to an agreed resolution. From time to time young people rail against the role of staff and resist their care and nurturing, particularly if they feel staff are getting too close. A social worker observed that the young person 'doesn't like tight boundaries which have been enforced'. Staff have a sound understanding of the basis for this and work hard to establish, develop and maintain good relationships. Another professional said 'The boundaries are clear and consistent and good for her, they have helped her to focus and given her structure'.

Staff actively and regularly seek young people's views and these influence the day-to-day running of the home. For example, upgrading the television and broadband in the home and active involvement in garden improvement. There has been some misunderstanding between staff and young people when their wishes have not been acted upon, particularly when safeguarding issues have to be taken into consideration by staff. There is limited written evidence to demonstrate how this has been explored with and explained to young people to enable them to fully understand why. Any complaint is taken seriously, investigated fully and reported on. Young people know how to complain, but have not chosen to use the formal in-house process. One complaint remained open at the time of this visit awaiting a response from the complainant.

Staff use the comprehensive placement plans to inform the way they work with young people. Needs relating to culture, religion and ethnicity are woven throughout the plan. Staff reflect on and evaluate the individual and direct work with young people and tailor their responses accordingly, updating the placement plan when necessary. This ensures that staff deliver good levels of consistency in their interactions with young people. An independent reviewing officer described 'An individual bespoke package that provided her with stability'.

Staff persistently support and encourage young people to access the full range of health and support services available to them. There has been some resistance from young people but staff are creative in their approach. For example using psychological assessments to inform their work with young people and building in drugs awareness teaching with other professionals. Professionals unanimously report good partnership working, one saying 'working with the home was a really positive experience'.

Staff excel in enabling young people previously not in education to participate fully. The team have established excellent links with educational establishments and worked effectively in partnership to engage young people in education. Professionals involved with young people spoke highly of the quality of communication of the staff. For example, 'They are excellent at capturing the right information'.

Staff offer young people the opportunity to engage in a range of activities. The uptake by young people is variable dependent on their mood and attitude on the day, but they have enjoyed trips to theme parks and the cinema for example.

The home is in an established residential area within easy reach of local facilities. 'The house is lovely' is a common refrain from young people and visiting professionals alike. The home is very well maintained and furnished to a high standard, with the newly fitted kitchen proving a popular place to sit and chat. The young people's bedrooms reflect their individual tastes. Staff undertaking sleep-in duties do not have separate sleeping accommodation in the home.

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

Safeguarding young people is a central tenet of the ethos of the home and is a significant strength. A social worker said 'They are very on the ball with safeguarding issues'. Young people feel safe and are protected from harm, as far as possible, by a knowledgeable and vigilant staff team. Some young people feel that staff may be a little over the top in their responses but actions by staff have highlighted and reduced risks of exploitation. Young people engage in discussions with staff about sexual exploitation. As a result they have a sound understanding of the staff concerns but are not always willing to admit the legitimacy of these. Risk assessment is embedded in practice, with protective factors clearly identified. A professional described the home as 'a place where the young person was relaxed and safe, that significantly reduced the risks for her'.

The approach of staff has achieved a significant reduction of instances of young people going missing. This has successfully promoted a much greater level of protection for vulnerable young people, who do not see themselves as vulnerable. On the occasions young people have gone missing staff have taken appropriate action, including looking for them. The staff have developed a good system of communication with the police that flags concerns quickly and ensures the information gets to the right place in good time. The management of the home participate in missing person panels, ensuring effective information sharing.

Staff training in a recognised behaviour management method has contributed to the infrequent use of physical interventions. When such interventions are used it is for appropriate reasons with robust recording of the incident. There is also a low level use of sanctions. The manager evaluates all behaviour management methods and uses this to inform staff practice to good effect. For example young people are encouraged and enabled to reflect on the impact of their behaviour, using a restorative justice approach rather than financial reparation, which had not been shown to result in changes to behaviour.

The manager applies the robust recruitment and vetting procedures in the appointment of staff. Young people are involved in the process and their views are

taken into account. This ensures that unsuitable individuals are not employed to work with the young people. Investigations into allegations of harm are managed well, with appropriate referrals, action taken and follow up on the rare occasion it has been required.

The environment is safe and secure. Staff undertake regular routine health and safety and fire checks and ensure that servicing takes place as required. Staff are trained in health and safety matters, supported by detailed and up-to-date risk assessments.

Leadership and management

good

There is a suitably experienced manager in post, who was registered in July 2014 and was the deputy manager of the home prior to that. She has almost completed her Level 5 qualification in management. The management of the home have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. There is a clear aim to provide a continually improving service, using feedback which is actively sought. Both recommendations made in the last report have been met. Monthly reports by the independent visitor are very detailed and focus strongly on the views and experiences of young people. The manager takes these reports seriously and actively responds to any recommendations made by the visitor.

The statement of purpose and young people's guide are updated as required. They accurately set out the aims and objectives of the home and these are well understood by young people and other stakeholders. The company has decided not to renew its membership of a particular therapeutic group.

The manager has thorough and robust monitoring systems in place. Areas for development are identified through this process and are included in the development plans for the home. There is a separate annual development plan that reflects the improvements young people would like and this is updated as progress is made. The manager maintains an ongoing analysis of the difference living at the home has made to young people. Young people's hugely improved engagement with education is particularly noteworthy.

The staffing of the home is sufficient for and responsive to the young people placed. On occasion there may be staff lone working. There is a generic risk assessment in place for lone working. This does not take into account factors that may be associated with individual members of staff and young people. There has been significant staff turnover in the last year but this has been well managed. Staff are well supported through regular individual and group supervision and team meetings. The manager is working with staff, through supervision and training, on increasing their confidence to make decisions when on shift. Training is of a good standard. There is a comprehensive programme of mandatory training, regularly refreshed and updated, and this is supplemented by courses sourced in response to the emerging

needs of young people.

Staff effectively support young people to prepare for and attend reviews so that they are enabled to contribute meaningfully.

Staff maintain records to a very good standard. The mix of hardcopy and electronic recording systems work well together. In the main records are stored securely, however some on open shelves in the locked office are not as secure.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.