

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC040175
Inspector	Sophie Wood
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	The Drive Care Homes Limited
Registered person address	Cyrinus House 18 Hatherley Road Sidcup Kent DA14 4BG
Responsible individual	Emmanuel Okon Akpan
Registered manager	Susan Ashburn
Date of last inspection	18/03/2014

Inspection date	25/07/2014
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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	adequate
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Young people achieve positive outcomes in all areas of their development because of the wide range of opportunities available to them. The maintenance of positive family relationships is invaluable to all concerned. From their starting points, young people make steady and sustained progress in areas including their physical and emotional health, education and learning, and moving onto adulthood. There are occasions however, where individual needs are not succinctly captured within care planning materials and this hinders accurate progress monitoring.

Young people enjoy safe and appropriate relationships with the staff. A lot of fun and laughter is balanced with clear behavioural expectations and safe boundaries. Young people trust the clear routines that follow. Current gaps within safeguarding guidance and procedures presents potential risks for the young people and the staff. Although no immediate risks of harm are apparent, these omissions should be rectified without delay to ensure staff's full understanding of their individual and collective safeguarding responsibilities.

Young people's views are routinely captured in order to influence the running of the home. Routine discussions at house meetings include food, expectations and activities. There is room within these forums to introduce additional discussion points which would enrich consultation processes further.

Monitoring systems and processes have been strengthened. Senior managers have a better understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses. The staff team is

more actively involved in these processes and this encourages their ownership of making continued improvements. Some areas require further evaluation but the Registered Manager already demonstrates an accurate awareness of where and how change needs to occur to ensure continued improvement.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This private children's home can accommodate eight children with physical and learning disabilities. There is a garden with wheelchair access to the ground floor of the building.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
26/06/2013	Full	good
25/03/2013	Interim	good progress
27/06/2012	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
4 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and the children's guide (Regulation 5(a))	30/08/2014
11 (2001)	promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated there. This is specific to update current procedures to include adult protection guidance (Regulation 11(1)(a))	23/08/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon, in the day to day running of the home. This is specific to expanding upon the areas explored at team meetings and key worker sessions (NMS 1.1)
- ensure children receive personalised care that promotes all aspects of their individual identity. This is specific to ensure all individual needs are positively addressed through care plans (NMS 2.1)
- ensure the home does not restrict the liberty of any child as a matter of routine. This is specific to completing the on-going review of the locking of the front door and the restriction of access to the kitchen (NMS 3.17)
- review the policy on managing behaviour. This is specific to providing clear guidance on how to record any use of physical guidance for a young person (NMS 3.3)
- implement a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. This is specific to the frequency of reviewing individual risk assessments (NMS 4.5)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. This is specific to the main communal areas of the home (NMS 10.3)
- ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling activities of the home. This is specific to include more evaluation with regards Regulation 34 monitoring. (NMS 21.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people are very positive about living in this home. Their comments include, 'I love the staff' and 'it's really good.' Placing social workers endorse this view. They say, '[child's name] has settled really quickly' and '[child's name] has made excellent progress since coming to live here.'

Young people lead healthy lifestyles. Physical activities are enjoyed by all, as are healthy and nutritious meals. Young people do not engage in behaviours which could damage their health. Those with specific health and medical needs receive the support they need. This aspect enhances their enjoyment and participation in community based activities. The staff team works collaboratively with external agencies, including specialist consultants and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Young people learn to make sense of their past experiences and this aids their emotional development.

Young people make good progress at school because they attend the settings which meet their needs. They have excellent attendance records. Newly placed young people benefit from individually tailored educational support while more permanent arrangements are made. Smooth transitions into college are achieved through the effective partnerships between the home and placing social workers.

Young people maintain positive attachments with those who are important to them. Parents and relatives are very frequent visitors to the home.

Young people grow in confidence. Measured risks promote their continued development. A wide range of life skills are routinely practised and this enriches young people's experiences of the wider world. A very positive example demonstrates one young person taking an active role in deciding upon a future placement as they are preparing to move onto adult services.

Quality of care **adequate**

Young people enjoy affectionate and nurturing relationships with the staff. Opportunities are regularly provided to ensure young people are listened to. They influence the running of the home through house meetings and individual key working sessions. Care is taken to promote effective communication through the use of individual support aids where these are necessary.

Young people rarely engage in harmful or challenging behaviour. The home's approach when situations do occur is to distract and de-escalate to avoid potentially

dangerous situations. To this end, there has been no use of physical restraint techniques for many months. Approved sanctions are extremely rare. The home places heavy emphasis upon young people's learning needs. A staff member said, 'I would not use a sanction that a young person would not understand.'

Staff demonstrate a sound understanding of young people's individual needs. They are able to describe their unique personality traits and care and support requirements. This knowledge is not as effectively captured within written care plans. Some areas are very specifically targeted, such as methods of communication. This enables the team to be consistent and benefits the individual young person. Other areas lack sufficient details, including a number of risk assessments and how all areas of a young person's care should be addressed in daily living. This absence of clarity risks an uncoordinated team approach. This is further exacerbated by the current use of additional bank staff while permanent recruitment is on-going.

Young people live in a spacious and suitably equipped home. The rear garden is very well used and is a safe place to play. Good transport provision ensures young people regularly go out to individual places of their own choosing and interest. Some of the young people have made great efforts to personalise their own bedrooms. All areas of the home are safely maintained and cleaned to a high standard. However, the general décor with regards to communal areas, including the lounge and dining room is looking tired. Some creative redecoration, with the young people's communication needs in mind, would have a positive impact.

Certain areas of the home are, at times inaccessible to the young people. This includes the kitchen at key times. The front door is frequently locked and although this is being reviewed, there is no current clear rationale in place to support this practice. The high staffing ratios which are in place should be factored into a review of this situation.

The permanent staff team receives a wide range of regularly refreshed, appropriate training. On one recent occasion, bespoke training arrangements occurred in preparation for a new admission. This young person is effectively looked after by staff who are competent to meet their specific health needs. This reassures the young person and their family members.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people with effective communication skills say they feel safe. Young people with additional communication difficulties display behaviours and demeanours which suggest feelings of ease and safety in the home. Placing social workers fully endorse this view. Their comments include, 'the staff understand the risks for [child's name] and provide effective safeguards.' Another comment includes, '[child's name] actually needs to take more risks, in line with growing up and the staff balance this very well.'

Individual team members, including bank staff, are able to outline and describe the home's immediate safeguarding procedures. With regards to less communicative children, they speak about the importance of vigilant observation, such as behavioural changes and mood swings as indicators of concern.

Safeguarding training, through external providers is routinely refreshed. This includes, adult protection, given the age range of the young people accommodated but there is no separate policy or procedural guidance in place for staff to follow in this regard. This risks potential mistakes or delays in reporting situations or concerns, should they occur for the older young people.

Individual safeguarding concerns are thoroughly investigated and recorded. The home is able to demonstrate its effective liaison with external agencies, including the local safeguarding children's board, the police and local authority designated officer. The Registered Manager maintains appropriate individual records but there is no current system in place to provide her with an overview of safeguarding occurrences and concerns. This omission inhibits her ability to effectively monitor for potential patterns and trends.

Individual risk assessments cover a range of appropriate topics. A number have not been reviewed even though the risks are noted to have declined. There is a tendency to set blanket review dates for risk assessments and this risks some information and guidance being out of date. Young people's progress may be hindered as a result.

Individual behaviour management plans refer to potential triggers and de-escalation techniques. A suitable bound log is in place to record physical interventions but there has been no such use for many months. There are occasions however, where staff may momentarily guide a young person away from a potentially hazardous situation. To ensure robust safeguards for all concerned, the home should consider how such events will be recorded and monitored.

High staffing ratios and diligent shift planning ensures young people's whereabouts are well known at all times. There have been no incidents of young people being absent or running away. Individual risk assessments detail the specific action to take in the event of a young person going missing. This guidance is in line with local police and social services protocols.

The organisation's implementation of a robust recruitment procedure serves to protect the young people. New staff do not take up their positions until all of the required checks have been verified and returned. The same close scrutiny is also applied for bank staff. Agency staff are not used.

Young people live in a safe physical environment. Routine health and safety checks are up-to-date and staff members take individual and collective responsibility to report any concerns as they arise. Fire drills are routinely practised; young people know what to do. Some security measures are currently under review. This includes

the locking of the front door. In line with this current action, it is recommended that the restrictions to the kitchen are similarly reviewed.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager has over ten years experience of working with vulnerable groups. She became the Registered Manager for this home in March 2014. Her previous experience lies mainly with the elderly; she has relevant management and care qualifications in this regard. She fully utilises her transferrable skills but also recognises the requirement to complete additional relevant training. She is registered to complete the level 5 Diploma in 'leadership for health and social care and children and young people's services'. The Registered Manager demonstrates a strong commitment towards her own continued learning and also drives the value of this with the staff team, through their supervisions and team meetings.

Within a short space of time, the Registered Manager has instigated positive changes. Team meetings are sharper and more focused and care plan formats are under review. Long-standing staff members say, 'there is more structure now' and 'we are held accountable more than before.'

Three recommendations were made from the last inspection in March 2014. These related to Regulation 33 and 34 monitoring, and making timely notifications to Ofsted. All of these have been satisfactorily addressed.

Two complaints have been received by the home since the last inspection. One has been satisfactorily resolved. The other is on-going. Senior managers are liaising with external agencies in this regard. The Registered Manager maintains a complaint's log but this is not fully utilised in terms of robust monitoring. Potential patterns and trends may be missed.

An active recruitment campaign is currently underway. Permanent staff members work flexibly to reduce wherever possible, the use of regular bank staff. There has been no use of agency staff. Although any use of additional staff members is unsettling, the young people are not adversely affected due to diligent shift planning. This protects key worker time which is important to the young people.

Staff members say they benefit from more structured and regular supervision. Team meetings are also referred to very positively. Space has been created within these forums to specifically target critical policies and procedures to ensure staff's continued understanding. A number of policies and procedures have either been recently reviewed, or are targeted for updates in the near future. Given the shortfalls identified within current safeguarding guidance, it is strongly recommended that this guidance is prioritised.

Placing social workers confirm that the home delivers upon its Statement of Purpose. They talk about 'excellent communication' and 'being more than able to meet individual needs.' Notwithstanding, some omissions are apparent; for example, the lift which is described within this document is currently not in use and this could be critical to a potential placing officer.

Records in relation to care planning are variable in terms of content and quality. Monthly reports generally provide a clear picture of the progress made by the young people. Some formats, for example, daily shift logs are cumbersome and repetitive and not always fully completed. These specific omissions have already been identified through rigorous Regulation 33 monitoring and are being addressed by the Registered Manager.

Young people benefit from being looked after by suitably qualified and experienced staff. A robust system, operated at the organisation's head office tracks and monitors individual and collective training needs. Permanent staff members either hold a relevant National Vocational Qualification or are undertaking a relevant Diploma. There are also examples of currently qualified staff undertaking additional, higher Diplomas as part of their own continued professional development. This investment demonstrates the organisation's commitment to continued improvement, as well as its financial viability.

Monitoring systems are improving. The recent appointment of an independent Regulation 33 visitor has brought rigour and challenge to quality assurance processes. Recent reports contain numerous recommendations to achieve improved outcomes. These are welcomed by the team. The Registered Manager conducts regular monitoring checks, in line with Regulation 34 requirements. Strengths and weaknesses are being identified; however, greater evaluation and analysis of her findings is needed. The Registered Manager and the Responsible Individual are very accepting of critical analysis and demonstrate a strong commitment to continue to improve.

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.

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