

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC462951
Inspector	Rosie Davie
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	ERA Care Limited
Registered person address	Unit G22 Allen House The Maltings, Station Road Sawbridgeworth Hertfordshire CM21 9JX
Responsible individual	Stephen Milton
Registered manager	Francis Williams
Date of last inspection	03/09/2014

Inspection date	14/01/2015
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Previous inspection	sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Staff deliver personalised and individualistic care reflecting religious beliefs and culture. They intend to build good relationships with all young people. They talk with them about taking responsibility for their behaviour, safety, health and well-being. Staff support and encourage young people to attend education.

Parents spoken to say their children have settled well and receive a consistently good standard of care and support.

External agencies say that young people are safe and expected to reduce risk taking behaviours. One social worker commented: 'well done to the staff team for their relentless supports given during the young person's stay.'

Since the last inspection Ofsted have considered one matter of compliance relating to staffs inappropriate management of behaviour. The homes senior leaders sufficiently addressed the concern raised.

The Registered Manager is experienced in caring for young people with challenging behaviours. A calm and nurturing staff team support young people towards achieving good outcomes.

This inspection identifies regulatory short falls in relation to the Statement of Purpose and staff recording measures used when intervening physically to keep young people safe. Recommendations to further improve good practice focus on education, consistency in the application of risk assessment and promoting positive behaviour.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides care and accommodation for two young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/09/2014	Interim	sustained effectiveness
10/10/2013	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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include - a description of the measure used (Regulation 17B (3) c)	31/03/2015
5 (2001)	keep under review and revise the statement of purpose. (Regulation 5 (a))	29/05/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure children and young people are helped by staff to achieve their

educational or training goals. This includes providing support, facilities and opportunities as needed. Staff work with a child's education provider to maximise each child's achievement and to minimise any under achievement with specific reference to discreet space for home tutoring (NMS 8.4)

- ensure the home implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment with specific reference to the installation of window restrictors (NMS 4.5)
- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all children and staff with specific reference to the structure for promoting positive behaviour. (NMS 3.8)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Young people come to this home because agencies have concerns about personal safety and risk taking behaviours. Those who remain placed for any length of time adopt strategies which reflect the development of resilience. One young person said: 'I am learning that it is better to go to my room and cool down when I get angry.'

Young people access a range of health appointments such as dentist, doctors and opticians and this helps them to develop and maintain good levels of physical health. One young person said: 'I am getting up every day and making sure that I take time to look well, I have not always done that.'

Attendance at education reflects young people's circumstances. Some young people attend school out of area. Staff transport them which ensures attendance and provides continuity at times of uncertainty. There is an expectation that young people who receive home tutoring attend and engage in education. This keeps young people stimulated. One young person said: 'I do not want to do education everyday but the staff talk to me about that and often persuade me that it is good for me to be learning, and they are right.' However the young person also said 'It can be busy when there are other things happening in the house and then I find it difficult to concentrate.' This means that there is a shortfall in the coordination of the arrangements for tutoring in the home.

Young people benefit from contact with others who are important to them. They receive practical and emotional support to maintain relationships with family and those who are significant. This reduces isolation and helps to promote young people's psychological wellbeing. One young person said: 'I went with staff to visit my brother recently and that really cheered me up.'

Young people receive incentives to complete household tasks. One young person said: 'before I came here I did not know how to turn a washing machine or how to use an iron.' Most young people participate in food planning and preparation which promotes skills for independence. One young person said; 'I have begun to learn about how to apply for a job. That is something new and interesting.' This encourages young people to think about life transitions.

Quality of care **good**

Staff and young people often develop positive relationships. One young person who had recently left the service after a short stay said: 'Thank you. You gave me support, courage and made me laugh when I most needed it.'

Staff encourage young people to behave appropriately and to take responsibility for their actions. Some young people get on well with one another and friendships develop. Young people are able to make links between behaviour and building positive peer relationships.

Staff consult young people individually about the running of the home, encouraging them to feel their opinions are valued. One young person said; 'All the staff are really great here. They always ask me about what I want. It could be about food, going out, how to spend time together, anything really.' Where placement plans reflect a longer stay, staff help young people to decorate and accessorise their room. Staff helped one young person to buy a pet during the inspection. The young person said: 'The staff and I made a plan about what I needed to do to show that I am responsible enough to look after a pet. I did what I was asked to do and today they are keeping their end of the agreement.' This helps young people to feel listened to and raises self-esteem.

Efficient systems are in place for supporting young people to make a complaint. Young people receive a guide which includes information about the running of the home. Staff successfully encourage young people who are familiar with the routines in the home to be involved in updating the guide and to talk to new young people about their rights and responsibilities. This motivates some young people to take ownership of the home and contributes towards a smoother transition for those coming into the home. One young person said: 'All of the staff and the other young people have helped me to settle in. I also got a guide about the home and time to ask any questions I wanted to. It's just made things easier for me.'

Every young person has an individualised plan. Documents detail the placement plan and identify the approach for managing risk and supporting behaviour. One social worker said: 'The staff are very good at supporting the care and risk management plan.' This means staff share an understanding of the placement aims and objectives and there is a consistent approach to young people's care. Young people are involved in updating their plan. They have opportunity to comment and discuss feelings in resident meetings and key work sessions. One young person said: 'I meet regularly with my two key workers. I do fun things with one and might talk how I am feeling. With the other, it's more formal. We sit down and look at things like when I need to go to the doctor or the times for me to see my family. She writes down what we talk about. I get to read it all through and sign it. This helps me to know what is going on and it helps me a lot.'

External agencies have good relationships with staff. Social workers spoken to say communication is very good and enhanced by weekly written reports. The looked after nurse visits to meet with young people and staff. Young people referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services who do not receive a service can benefit alternatively from the recently re-introduced, in house services of a psychotherapist. This is helpful in supporting and understanding young people's psychological health

needs.

Staff involve young people in a range of activities which reflect the interests and abilities of the young person. Opportunities include swimming, gym and ice skating. One member of staff said that she had taken a young person for a run to help to keep them active. This means that staff positively role model healthy lifestyle choices.

The home sits within a residential area. The premises provide sufficient space for young people in both communal living and private space. This helps young people feel relaxed and comfortable in the home.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people say that they feel safe in this home. One young person said: 'I feel safer here than I did at home.'

The majority of young people referred to this home have histories of going missing from other placements. Some young people do not go missing. Some continue with this behaviour and for some the frequency reduces. There are good links with the local police. Staff understands and follow the procedures in place in the event of a young person going missing which includes searching the local area. Staff work efficiently with partner agencies to ensure that there is a shared understanding of triggers which helps to reduce incidences of missing, in some cases.

Managers complete detailed plans towards promoting positive behaviour. These help staff to understand the most effective strategies to use to support young people in crisis. Physical restraint is rarely used. However, when it is, staff do not clearly describe the specific measure of intervention used which, is a shortfall. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour. For example, staff or managers meet with them to talk about the seriousness of behaviours such as causing damage to property or verbally abusing staff. This inspection identified that the home had not implemented clear consequences for extreme behaviours. This does not provide structure for young people to make connections between their actions and their behaviour.

The organisation carefully selects and recruits staff to work in the home. Safe recruitment pre-employment checks are completed. All staff receive monthly supervision. New staff receive an induction and fortnightly supervision within their probationary period. Staff access training in safeguarding. This helps to ensure the suitability of adults working with the young people.

Staff consistently complete regular fire and safety checks around the premises. Young people receive information about the homes fire procedures as part of their induction. As a result, young people can describe the action they are required to take

in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

adequate

The Registered Manager is experienced and approachable. He is motivated to provide opportunities for young people to make positive contributions in society. He divides his time between two homes. He has been the manager for this home since it opened in 2013. His previous experience of working in residential care means he has a breadth of knowledge about the issues faced by looked after young people. The Registered Manager completed the required Level 5 diploma in Leadership in Health and Social Care in December 2014.

There have been no complaints by young people, staff, stakeholders or neighbours since the last inspection. In addition there have been no allegations made in relation to staff. The matter of compliance identified by Ofsted following a notification of a serious incident in the home resulted in a satisfactory conclusion.

Managers draw up risk assessments. These include identifying potential hazards within the homes physical environment. Managers do not ensure that there is consistent application in order to reduce risk. For example, observation supported by records sampled, identified that upstairs window restrictors were required to maximise the safety of some young people. This inspection identified a lack of consistency in application. Whilst managers rectified this during the inspection this approach to risk is disproportionate and falls short.

This inspection identified that there have been a number of emergency short stay admissions. The home has a Statement of Purpose and this provides detail about the approach and ethos. However, the information provided does not transparently reflect the process used by managers for matching emergency admissions with those placed for longer periods.

The homes management team have met the requirements from the last interim inspection. Managers continue to work towards meeting the one recommendation. The Registered Manager has a development plan which outlines the proposed action for making improvements across the home. The development plan informs the agenda of the regular staff team meetings. This means that staff are aware of the plans in place to raise standards across the home.

Managers employ a sufficient number of staff. They provide annual appraisals and identify staff training needs. Staff have the opportunity to attend a range of courses and to access eLearning. For example; child protection, child sexual exploitation and delivering best practice care. There is an expectation from managers that staff

develop as practitioners. This means that staff receive sufficient support to meet the diversity of needs of the young people that they care for.

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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