

SC025733

Registered provider: Friends Therapeutic Community Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home, which is run by a charitable community trust, provides a therapeutic programme for up to 17 children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities. The service caters for a specific range of needs and ages, as detailed in the statement of purpose. The wide range of facilities includes a registered on-site school and vocational workshops to support accredited work-based learning courses. The community is jointly registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 October 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 23 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- The children have trusted relationships with staff. All of the staff adopt the therapeutic community ethos of the home.
- Children are able to express their views and wishes. Interactive daily community meetings provide an excellent forum for frank and honest discussions.
- Each child has an individual education plan that incorporates clear targets and aims. Individual progress is reviewed regularly.
- The children make exceptional progress at the home.
- The children benefit greatly from an excellent range of activities.
- The staff support the children to have ongoing contact with their family members.
- Children learn valuable independence skills as part of an outstanding bespoke life-skills programme.
- Inspirational and extremely effective transitional support for the children continues when they leave the home.
- Children feel safe at the home. There is a highly effective and clear approach to bullying, and the staff address any issues quickly.
- The children do not go missing from the home. They are aware of the risks and make good choices to engage with the programme and to maintain their place in this therapeutic community.
- There is excellent planning for new children coming into the home.
- Impact and matching risk assessments are extremely well considered prior to admission.
- Risk assessments are extremely comprehensive.
- The wealth of experience and skills that the staff team bring to the home is outstanding.
- The staff work hard to maintain positive links with the local community.
- The leadership team has a strong vision for the home and strives to consistently improve and develop.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The information contained in some recruitment files is not easily accessible.
- The external monitoring does not consistently include the views of parents or placing authorities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
27/09/2016	Full	Outstanding
24/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
01/09/2015	Full	Outstanding

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

Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

In particular, ensure that all information in recruitment records is easily accessible.

- Any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)

In particular, seek the views of parents and placing authorities.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children make exceptional progress at the home. One child said, 'This place has been brilliant for me. It has given me so much opportunity. I would never have had this anywhere else.' The staff enable the children to make significant changes in their lives. As a result, the children are engaging with educational activities and participating in therapy. The care that they receive is of an excellent standard and is tailored to meet each individual's unique needs. This package of care is helping the children to significantly reduce negative behaviours.

The children have trusted relationships with the staff. All of the staff adopt the therapeutic community ethos of the home. The staff skilfully support the children to take responsibility for their decisions and actions, which helps the children to grow in confidence. The nurturing and consistent approach means that the children feel secure and well cared for.

Children are able to express their views and wishes freely. Interactive daily community meetings, based on the therapeutic approach, provide an excellent forum for frank and honest discussions. The children have an opportunity to speak to the staff individually in their therapy sessions. The children know how to complain, and they have access to an independent advocate. The children are comfortable talking to the adults around them.

A registered school provides on-site education. Each child has their own individual education plan. These regularly reviewed plans incorporate clear targets and aims. Some of the children struggled to engage with formal education prior to coming to the home.

A number of vocational activities such as mechanics and woodwork help to encourage engagement. The children have set up their own upcycling furniture business. This is progressing well and enables the children to see the success that their hard work has accomplished.

The staff are proactive at monitoring and addressing the children's individual health needs. The staff make sure that the children attend their health appointments. Any health themes are tracked and reviewed. Clear and comprehensive health plans provide all relevant information.

The children benefit from an excellent range of activities. The staff are creative in their approach to facilitating appealing and exciting opportunities. The children recently attended a narrow boat holiday, during which they were able to learn new skills and visit places to enrich their lives. The children gain immensely from these experiences, growing in confidence and gaining new social skills. One child said of one of his experiences, 'I have had the best day of my life.'

Professionals and parents clearly describe how their children's confidence has improved, and the exceptional progress that their children have made at the home. A social worker said, 'I am 100% happy with the service. He [my child] is engaging so well that he is now in a position of trust. This [the home] is a brilliant resource.' A parent said, 'He [my child] has come on leaps and bounds. He is doing really well.'

The staff support the children to have ongoing contact with their family members. This means that the children maintain important relationships throughout their time at the home. The staff have an inclusive approach to contact and communication with parents and carers. Parents are positive about the communication from the staff and assistance with contact arrangements. A parent said, 'It [contact] is really positive. We see him [our child] every six weeks. When we have visited the home, we are always made to feel welcome. We can always speak to a member of staff. My son gets on with the staff and he trusts them.'

Children learn valuable independence skills as part of an outstanding, bespoke life skills programme. The staff promote various skills through increased responsibility and tasks for the children. This means that the children are well prepared to move into independent living and adapt to life outside of the home.

A social worker described the semi-independence programme that is offered by the home as 'the best' that she has seen. She said it is 'second to none'. This social worker described the positive impact that the semi-independence programme has had on her child as 'amazing'. It is an exceptional and innovative scheme that enables the children to live independently in a bungalow on-site. The programme facilitates pared-down support on-site so that children can prepare for the transition to adulthood.

Transitional support for the children continues when they leave the home. A specialist team of support workers and volunteers keep in touch with each child, undertaking outreach visits and providing ongoing support in the community. This support is invaluable at a time when the children may be at their most vulnerable.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Children feel safe at the home. There is a highly effective and clear approach to managing bullying, and the staff address any issues quickly. The staff carefully challenge the children within the therapeutic environment. This helps each individual to be aware of their own behaviour and acknowledge how this impacts on others. The staff fully understand the dynamics in the home and continue to monitor these very well.

The children do not go missing from the home. They are aware of the risks. The children make good choices to engage with the programme and to maintain their place in this therapeutic community. This demonstrates the success of the work undertaken at the home and how effective the trusting relationships are within the group. The staff support the children to engage in the therapeutic work, helping them to grow in confidence and improve their self-esteem.

The staff use physical intervention rarely and only as a last resort when there is a clear risk to the children or others. Staff are effective at using de-escalation techniques. This helps the children to self-regulate, by enabling them to take time out and think of their own solutions to resolve any conflict.

There is excellent planning for new children coming into the home. During the inspection, a new child visited the home and the children supported him to feel at home and showed him the facilities. These introductions help new children to feel comfortable and reassured.

There is a highly effective approach to impact and matching assessments for each child. These assessments are well scrutinised and discussed prior to an agreement about any admission. This makes sure that the home is able to meet the individual needs of the child and reduces the risk of a placement breakdown. If a child's placement ends early, there is a clear debriefing between the managers and the staff to explore what happened and what could have been done differently.

Excellent risk management strategies are in place. Risk assessments are extremely comprehensive and up to date. They provide clear details of risks and reduction measures. The careful oversight of the multi-disciplinary team is evident. All of the staff are aware of the changing needs of the children and the potential risks.

There are very clear guidelines in relation to internet use and the potential risks. The staff use their skills and initiative to identify and manage concerns quickly. The staff share information effectively with the appropriate authorities and family members.

A social worker said, 'I am happy with the open and clear communication from them [the staff].'

The clear and comprehensive location risk assessment includes all relevant information relating to the position of the home and any potential hazards or issues. The assessment describes who should be on site, as the home is set in substantial grounds.

There is evidence of safer recruitment processes. All appropriate safeguarding checks are carried out to make sure that the vulnerable children in the home are protected. However, on some recruitment files this information was not easily accessible.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The highly experienced registered manager holds a relevant level 4 diploma. The senior staff members are well qualified and provide excellent support. The wealth of experience and skills that the staff team brings to the home is outstanding. The children receive excellent, consistent clinical care that provides them with the therapy that they need to make positive changes in their lives.

Each staff member has access to an excellent training programme. The staff take responsibility for their own learning and professional development. They are suitably qualified and have excellent skills and knowledge. The managers support the staff through regular personal supervision sessions that are meaningful and comprehensive. The staff have access to ongoing guidance and support.

A dynamic staff team meets the complex and, at times, challenging needs of the children. The staff have high aspirations for the children and they show commitment to helping the children to achieve good outcomes. The staff spend time developing nurturing relationships with the children, which makes the children feel valued and part of the therapeutic community. When the home uses agency staff, they are well known and familiar to the children. The staff team is providing consistency of care, helping the children to build positive and trusting relationships.

The staff say that the induction process is comprehensive and well implemented. One staff member said, 'I am very happy here. There is really good training, and I feel well supported. Everyone helps out, and the work here is so good. You can really see the results.'

Care plans are up to date and comprehensive. The staff make excellent contributions to meetings with the placing authorities to discuss the progress of each child and assess whether any changes are required. The management team is proactive at promoting the needs of the children and challenging professionals effectively to make sure that the care plans are followed. Consequently, decisions about children are timely and in line with their needs.

The staff work hard to maintain positive links with the local community. This is highly successful. The home hosts a number of events throughout the year that are very well attended. The children are encouraged to help the local community, which gives them a sense of pride and achievement.

Parents talk of the positive relationships that they have with the staff. The home has an inclusive approach to working with families, which means that families are well informed and feel involved in their children's lives. One parent said, 'His [my child's] key worker is absolutely brilliant. He keeps me on the ball with things and does take my views on board.'

The leadership team has a strong vision for the home and consistently strives to improve and develop. The development plan has a clear focus on further improvements. The staff continue to strive to provide outstanding care, widening the horizons for the children and opening them up to new experiences and opportunities. The children are well cared for and nurtured during their time at the home and after they leave.

The internal monitoring report is effective and informative, providing a clear insight into progress during each period. However, the external monitoring does not consistently include the views of parents or placing authorities. This means that opportunities to consider these views as part of the service development are missed.

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 children. 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: SC025733

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Friends Therapeutic Community Trust

Registered provider address: Glebe House, Shudy Camps, Cambridge CB21 4RB

Responsible individual: Susan Brock-Hollinshead

Registered manager: Peter Clarke

Inspector

Debbie Young, social care inspector

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