

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	25/01/2016
Unique reference number	SC000673
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Action for Children 04764232 1097940
Registered person address	Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, WATFORD, WD18 8AG

Responsible individual	John Egan
Registered manager	Post Vacant
Inspector	Ann-Marie Born

Inspection date	25/01/2016
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	Requires improvement

SC000673

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Good care and placement plans provide a clear framework for individual goals and targets. Achievements are identified and celebrated
- The skilled and experienced staff team build nurturing and caring relationships with children and young people which promote their well-being and enrich their care experience
- Children and young people make good progress in developing self-care and independence skills which enhance their future placement opportunities
- Good partnership arrangements with parents and professionals provide consistent care and learning messages for children and young people
- Children and young people's sense of belonging within the consistent boundaries enhance their feelings of safety
- Robust safeguarding procedures ensure that children and young people are protected

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 the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
In order to complete a quality care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (2) (c))	23/03/2016
The system referred to in paragraph 2 must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (5))	23/03/2016

Recommendations

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

- The home should work in partnership with relevant people as appropriate to ensure that each child is provided with support (appropriate to their age and understanding) to communicate their views, wishes and feelings and participate as fully as possible in all aspects of their care planning and daily care. This may include the use of and support to use communication aids. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 22, paragraph 4.6)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 53, paragraph 10.11) In particular training on 'moving and handling'; 'anti bullying'; 'attachment disorder' and 'the outcomes arrow'.
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for children and young people who have learning disabilities. There are five permanent places and five places for children who receive short breaks. The home is operated by a national voluntary organisation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
14/01/2015	Full	Adequate
05/02/2014	Interim	Good progress
03/07/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
This home provides children and young people, whether they are permanent residents or on a short break, with all of the equipment, space and facilities they need. They thoroughly enjoy spending time in their individually prepared bedrooms or in the shared spaces. The home is all on one level with easy access to the large enclosed garden. Children and young people are able to move around easily from one area to another. This effectively promotes a sense of openness and freedom while they are kept safe at the same time. A parent said, 'Staff are caring and skilled, really do the best to cater to the needs of the child. The facility itself has good indoor and outdoor space.' Much improved care and placement plans identify each child and young person's needs and goals. Individual targets are carefully planned in line with children and young people's abilities and reflect where they are in their development. Children and young people are making considerable progress as a result of the perseverance and patience of the committed staff team. Whether this is wearing clothes appropriate for the weather conditions, learning how to brush their own teeth, taking part in interviews for new staff or making a video to explain the work of the home. A family member said, 'He's come along loads since he's been there. When he used to be with his foster carer he only mumbled but since he's been there you can have a whole conversation with him.' The majority of the staff team have worked at this home for a long period of time and children coming for short breaks have grown up with them. As a result, children and young people thrive within the familiar and trusted home where they feel they belong. They receive stimulation and the opportunity to participate in experiences they would not otherwise be able to do. Consequently, they learn new social and life skills. One parent wrote, 'Thank you for all your care and patience over the last eleven years looking after our special daughter. It has been greatly appreciated,' and another said, 'A heartfelt thanks for taking such good care of (Name) for the last five years and allowing him to have fun in a safe and familiar place, on his own terms.' Similarly, children and young people in the long term unit enjoy excellent relationships with staff. They are empowered by the sense of security and belonging the home engenders to make decisions about their lives and participate fully in decisions about their care. A young person said, 'I like it that they involve	

me in things and planning around the home. Not just little things like choosing meals and activities but I do the interviews for new staff as well. That makes me feel important.'

Children and young people enjoy trying new foods and eating a healthy diet. Their regular participation in physical activities not only improves their physical and emotional health but also bolsters their self-esteem. The excellent partnership working arrangements with health professionals ensure that children and young people's holistic and psychological health needs are well met. A looked after children's (LAC) nurse said, 'They have engaged her with everything to do with health, they have engaged her with healthy eating and lots of activities. She has developed so well under their care.'

Good partnership arrangements between the home and local schools ensure that children and young people receive consistent education messages. Consequently, they are enabled to make the most of their learning opportunities and build further social and life skills which enhance their self-esteem. A staff member said, 'Having the same children in together when they get on with each other is important because it gives them the chance to make friends. They often go to the same schools as well so they can spend time with their friends out of school the way they would have done if they hadn't had special needs.'

Children and young people enjoy warm and trusting relationships with the skilled and experienced staff team. It is evident that the staff know the children and young people in their care well and understand their individual communication methods. Good partnership working with schools and parents ensures that individual children's communication books usually travel with them enabling them to be understood at all times. However, on the occasions when this does not occur, there are insufficient visual aids available to children and young people. This could lead to them becoming frustrated if they feel they cannot express what they want immediately.

Children and young people are encouraged and enabled to participate in as many inclusive activities as they are able. These can include accessing local community provision as well as using the facilities in the home. The enthusiastic staff team are innovative in their approach to providing children and young people with new experiences. This enriches their care experience, allowing them to have fun while they learn social and life skills. A LAC nurse said, 'She has just blossomed in (Name of the home). She has developed socially and she has developed caring relationships with staff. At one time you couldn't have imagined her doing anything and now she loves walking.'

The dedicated management and staff team are very conscious that children and young people need to be prepared very carefully for transition from the home. They work closely with partner agencies and utilise young people's care plans and

'outcomes arrows' to identify and meet individual needs. A staff member said, '(Name) and (Name) are both teenagers and will stay here until they go on to semi-independent living or an adult provision. We are teaching them as many independence skills as we can so that they can have a choice of where they go. Choice is really important for them and I wouldn't want them to go just anywhere.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Children and young people feel safe. They are kept safe by the consistent boundaries employed within the home and the staff's knowledge of good safeguarding procedures. Any child protection concerns are reported promptly to relevant authorities and robust partnership working ensures that children and young people are protected. A social worker said, 'He's definitely safe there.' Comprehensive individual risk assessments identify where children and young people may be vulnerable. Careful planning ensures that they are safeguarded while still being able to participate in age appropriate activities. For example, attending local community provisions such as bowling, going for walks or going on a holiday. This allows children and young people to build social and life skills while having fun. A family member said, 'It's an excellent place there and it's good for him. He's more than safe there.' The proactive staff team are aware of the potential risks of bullying behaviour. Information is available to children and young people throughout the home and short break sessions are carefully matched so that situations where bullying might arise are lessened. Children and young people are protected by these measures. High staffing levels and appropriate security measures, such as the enclosed garden and locked front door, mean that opportunities for children and young people to go missing from home are limited. There has been one incident of a young person 'running away' since the last inspection. Appropriate, locally agreed protocols were effectively followed ensuring that she was swiftly and safely returned. Lessons learnt from that situation ensure that further safeguards have been implemented preventing a further missing episode. Individual behaviour management plans identify children and young people's triggers and how staff should manage inappropriate behaviours. For the most part, children and young people respond appropriately to the consistent care and boundaries they receive. This allows them to learn more appropriate ways of	

expressing frustration or anger. Any incidents are carefully recorded in behaviour support incident logs'. This allows for all incidents to be overseen by managers enabling patterns to be identified and further strategies implemented. A social worker said, 'They have worked well with him and put in boundaries he understands and can work to. There has been a lot of progress.'

Physical intervention is used appropriately within the home. This mostly involves guiding a young person away from an unsafe situation but on occasion restraint is necessary in order to protect the individual, as well as the other residents and staff, from violent behaviours. A young person said, 'One of the things I really like is the staff can cope with me when I lose it. Other people haven't been able to do that. That makes me feel safe.' However, although most of these interventions are recorded accurately, some information is not recorded in sufficient detail by staff. This does not provide all concerned with the opportunity to learn from the incident.

Children and young people in the long stay unit are well supported to understand the consequences of their behaviours. Any sanction, or consequence, is tailored to the negative behaviour so that they learn more appropriate ways of behaving. This builds confidence in their abilities to express themselves positively allowing them to grow in self-esteem and feelings of well-being. A social worker said, 'They are giving him guidelines on what is appropriate behaviour. Consequences are relevant and he can understand.'

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
The suitably qualified registered manager has been in post since 2007. At present, she holds the overall responsibility for the home which is separated in to two units. One home is for long-term residential care and the other functions as a short break provision. She was not present for this inspection but the individual managers of the two units were. The organisation is in the process of re-registering the home with Ofsted in to two separate establishments, which will reflect the separate identities of the units. This home has demonstrated its capacity for improvement. All of the requirements and recommendations raised at the last inspection have been met. Consequently, children and young people's care planning is much improved leading to more focussed and targeted outcomes. The management team have a clear understanding of children and young people's developmental needs. They use the 'outcomes arrows' well, particularly in the long	

stay unit to demonstrate the progress children and young people make. A social worker said, 'Since he has been there full time he has made really good progress. They have got him in really good routines. When I visit he is happy. For them to get him to sit at table is really good progress because he just used to wander around before.'

Robust recruitment procedures ensure children and young people are not cared for by people who may pose a risk to them. The home have experienced difficulties in appointing staff in the past and have had to use the services of an agency. They have countermanded this by employing more casual workers to ensure that children and young people receive consistent care from people they are familiar with. A parent reported, 'Staff are second to none, very friendly and very understanding to family when we ring about our child.'

Staff report that they receive regular, good quality, supervision which assists them in maintaining their good care of children and young people. Records of these sessions are now being appropriately completed in line with legislation. A staff member said, 'I love working here. I feel we are making a real difference in children's lives. We give the parents a break but also time for children to learn new skills and make friends.'

All staff have completed recent training in safeguarding which provides further protection for children and young people. However, there are gaps in training for some staff in the home's core areas. Although this is not to the detriment of children and young people's care and development, they will receive an even higher standard of care once all staff are fully trained.

Thorough and comprehensive external monitoring visits now fully comply with legislation. They assist the home in promoting the well-being of children and young people and ensuring their safety.

The internal audit procedures vary in quality and consistency. Not all areas are monitored as carefully as others, particularly around recording issues. In addition, although the views of children and young people, parents and professionals are regularly sought, they are not included in the audit process. Therefore, their opportunity to comment upon and influence the care children and young people receive is not being fully utilised.

Much improved recording processes around the notification of serious incidents mean that all relevant parties, including the regulator, are appropriately informed. Children and young people are safeguarded by these measures as this provides a multi-agency approach to their care. A social worker said, 'Communication with us is very good. They keep us well informed.'

Each unit has its own colourful and informative statement of purpose. These provide a comprehensive picture of the care to be provided. The home are fulfilling

their described ethos. As a result, children and young people are appropriately placed, enhancing their opportunities for success.

The dedicated and experienced management and staff team work hard to build positive and productive relationships with parents and professionals. They believe strongly that it is important for the children and young people in the home to receive all of the services they need, within consistent boundaries. This empowers children and young people to engage fully with the care provided. One of the managers' said, 'Our part in that young person's life is a key time, we want to give them confidence, choice and show them by example to be part of the community and go out in the community as much as possible and recognise where they are on that journey.'

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 the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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