

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	14/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC004429
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Action for Children 04764232 1097940
Registered provider address	Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, WATFORD, WD18 8AG

Responsible individual	Michael O'Sullivan
Registered manager	Louise Tumulty
Inspector	Christy Wannop

Inspection date	14/02/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Outstanding
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection	
This home was judged outstanding at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has improved effectiveness. In the short time since the last inspection, this short-break service for children with learning and physical disabilities has gone from strength to strength. Children continue to progress and have an extremely positive experience. The service has long established an excellent level of care and an outstanding experience for children over seven consecutive 'outstanding' Ofsted judgements. One parent described the benefits for her child as, 'independence from parents, she has been out in community and done stuff she wouldn't otherwise have done with us. Given room to grow as an individual. Set the ground roots for her next steps.' The last inspection made no requirements or recommendations. Despite this, leaders at the home and within the organisation have progressed their own development plans. These ensure that the work of the organisation has a measureable and positive impact on children's achievements and experience. Their drive is, 'it's all about the children.' The organisation is investing in improving the environment. The building is really well equipped, decorated and resourced for children who have physical and sensory disabilities. It is already an attractive, well-kept home. The organisation is preparing to improve it still further by extending to provide another quiet play space for more vulnerable children. A decorative overhaul is also planned. Work to strengthen an early focus on children's transitions to adult services has begun. The registered manager knows this time to be a source anxiety for parents. She is revitalising and amending accessible transition planning documentation to identify children's own wishes and feelings, and beginning to identify the small steps necessary to achieve them, several years before they reach young adulthood. Her consultative, inclusive approach means that the result will be firmly based on parents, staff and children's ideas for what could work best. Parents' meetings are a strength and illustrate the excellent commitment to partnership working and respect. Parents are well informed about the service their children use and enabled to be part of the process of challenge where support from partner professionals is not good enough. The organisation helps parents to have a	

voice with commissioners and the local authority. Guest speakers increase parent knowledge about financial issues, benefits, wills and trusts. Parents describe the service as, 'a lifeline for us.'

Activity based weekly children's meetings are also a valuable opportunity to gain their views, and engage children in planning their own care and contributing to the life of the home. Minutes are interesting pictorial records. Children were recently part of a review of fire safety. When children cannot vocalise, staff help them have their say and choose activities using eye pointing, signs and symbols to assist communication. Staff promote and a positive picture of the possibilities for, and rights of, children with disabilities through their highly skilled approach.

A robust safeguarding approach is finely tuned to the needs and additional vulnerabilities of children who have disabilities. Staff protective response to children is extremely effective. They keep a 'weather eye' for children who are not thriving and protect them where necessary. They are proactive in their flagging of early concerns to parents and carers and the placing authority. They participate fully in the local authority's six monthly 'child in need' reviews and are ready to escalate any concerns that indicate children may need statutory protection. A parent described her confidence in the safety of her child, 'It's like going to stay with her grandparents. No worries.'

This is an extremely well managed service. The manager is in the final stages of completing the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare. Highly effective systems for monitoring and quality review means that improvement for children is a constant feature of all activities. The manager implements lessons learnt from any complaints about care practice to ensure children benefit. Staff are long standing, well qualified and confident. They are committed advocates for children and their families. They keep children in mind.

Excellent decision-making about children's compatibility with each other ensures that they are not distressed or disturbed. Where children need higher staffing levels and a less busy environment, the manager reduces the number of children staying, so children have the closer care they need. This is borne out by a parental comment about the pleasure her child gets from visiting, 'She loves going. Excited when her suitcase comes out.' Children feel they have friends in the staff because of mutual respect and affection.

Partnership working with others to support and improve the experiences of children is a strength. The service has established a wide range of connections, parent and professionals and empowers parents through a clear communication and inclusive working towards their children's goals. Governance systems hold the views of parents and children at the core of all planning and activity. Parents told the manager, 'the service is amazing which is beneficial to (x) and for remaining family unit.' Another said, 'It 'enables our daughter to have some form of normality.'

Excellent links with commissioners and the local authority lead to persistent

advocacy on behalf for children and their families. Recently this has had a focus of strengthening transition planning and support.

Children clearly feel comfortable and at ease at the home, with staff and in their play. They are free to choose from easily accessible toys and equipment. Wellbeing is clear in the high levels of communication and activity with staff and other children. A child told the manager, 'Thank you for looking after me, for taking me outside to play, holding my hand tight to keep me safe, making my stay so happy.'

The service has a clear trajectory of consolidating excellence and has an ambitious reach to do even more. It is a supremely child-friendly place, focused on enrichment and happiness. One child summed it up, 'I'm happy.'

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to five children and young people. It is a short-break service for children and young people who have learning and/or physical disabilities. The home is operated and managed by a charitable organisation in partnership with the local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
02/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
04/08/2015	Full	Outstanding
11/02/2015	Full	Outstanding

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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