

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	28/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC004429
Type of inspection	Full
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	Louise Whittle

Inspection date	28/11/2016
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	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC004429

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people receive an exceptionally warm welcome from dedicated and committed staff.
- Highly skilled and experienced staff enable young people to communicate their views, wishes and feelings from the moment that they arrive. Staff use a wide a range of communication methods to meet the needs of each young person.
- Child-focused staff work hard to ensure that each young person benefits from all aspects of their stay, from the chance to relax in a 'home from home' environment to enjoying stimulating experiences like trips to the seaside and horse riding.
- Young people make significant and sustained progress in their development including communication, social development and the ability to manage their anxiety and behaviour.
- Young people are safe. Vigilant staff help young people to learn to keep themselves safe in the kitchen, in the event of fire and when crossing roads.
- Diligent staff regularly review and update the thorough, detailed and effective risk assessments and behaviour support plans. This attentive practice ensures that staff have the information that they need to keep these highly vulnerable young people safe.
- The registered manager is dedicated to providing young people and families with a service that makes a real difference. She is constantly thinking of ways to drive up standards and is in ongoing dialogue with young people, families, staff and professionals in order to make changes effective and relevant.
- Parents and professionals praise the staff and registered manager for their excellent level of communication. Parents particularly enjoy receiving photographs of their young person showing the activities that they have engaged in during their short break.

Full report

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 with learning and/or physical disabilities. The home is operated and managed by an independent provider in partnership with the local authority.

Recent inspection history

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

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
When young people arrive at the centre, vibrant staff welcome them with great warmth and enthusiasm. The centre provides a 'home from home' for young people to enjoy and benefit from during their short breaks. The focal point of the spacious and well-maintained centre is the open-plan living and dining room, where young people can engage in their own chosen activities as well as interacting with each other and staff. The walls are decorated with pictures of young people and staff, creating a personal and inclusive feel to the centre. Young people use a wide range of communication methods including verbal, body language, tablets to type words and eye movements. Staff provide pictures and items that young people can point to or hold. Highly skilled and perceptive staff quickly learn the communication methods for each young person and work hard to fully understand young people's views, wishes and feelings. Staff will often repeat questions and choices for a young person to be sure that they have correctly understood the young person's choice. Staff give young people's choices high priority and importance. When they arrive, young people decide which of the themed bedrooms they want and they can express their choice of food, activities and what music they want to hear. Young people can indicate which staff member they would like to be with and where they want to be, for example, in their room or in the sensory room or garden. Young people are able to engage fully in the centre during their short break, which supports their social and emotional well-being and development. Young people attend and engage in the young people's meetings. One development since the last inspection is that staff now enable young people to take their own minutes for the first part of the meeting. Young people like to choose and plan a range of activities, including swimming, going to the park, soft play, shopping and trips to the seaside. They also choose resources for the centre such as DVDs and videos of their favourite pop groups and films. After the meetings, staff share the minutes with all of the young people and include a photograph of each young person who attends the meeting showing their individual communication method, such as eye movement. Young people respond positively to the highly personal and individual care and attention that they receive. They are able to relax and form trusting relationships with the staff. Young people have fun with the staff who create a lively atmosphere and engage them in jokes and banter and in activities such as crafts in preparation for Christmas.	

Young people make exceptional progress when they come to the centre in many areas of their development, including helping to set the table, sitting and eating at the table and communication and independence skills. Perceptive staff take photographs of young people during their short breaks to record their interactions and achievements. Staff cut these pictures into leaf shapes to put on the large and colourful achievement tree on the living room wall. Young people thoroughly enjoy seeing their pictures on the tree and are proud of their achievements.

Staff help to meet young people's diversity and identity needs by writing an individual plan for each young person, in consultation with school and parents. Their plan might include the provision of foods that reflect their cultural or religious diversity. Staff and young people also decorate the centre to celebrate, for example, for Diwali, Chinese New Year, Christmas and Halloween. The diversity board in the living room displays pictures of different people sitting together or doing activities, all of which illustrate a range of positive relationships to the young people.

Feedback about the service from young people, parents and professionals is very positive. One parent said, 'We are absolutely delighted with the way she has been encouraged to settle in.' Another commented, 'He seems genuinely happy to go now.' Another parent said, 'He loves going to the centre and meeting his friends there (workers included).' Parents particularly value the photographs that staff send home with the young people and one parent said, 'The report and photos help enormously, as he will interact and tell us what he has done.' The parent of one young person said of the service, 'Fantastic. I can't fault them.' One young person communicated that he was very happy at the centre and had lots of fun with the staff.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
Highly trained staff safeguard young people who have complex developmental, medical and behavioural needs. The excellent staff communication and constant vigilance are a key aspect of this success. Staff skilfully balance the need to keep young people safe, while enabling them to be as independent as possible and move around the centre as they wish, including cooking in the kitchen. Staff are aware of the need to repeat guidance and instructions many times to some of the young people to help them understand how to keep themselves safe in the kitchen, when crossing roads and in the event of a fire. Staff work in close collaboration with health, education and social workers and parents, to ensure that information required to keep young people safe is passed	

between them efficiently and accurately. For example, information about a young person's emotional state, which can be vital to ensuring their safety, and needs to be available to everyone who is caring for him or her that day. A very valuable and important aspect of keeping young people safe is the use of daily diaries, which travel with the young person so that everyone who cares for that young person can write in the book and keep information up to date.

Staff write and review thorough and effective risk assessments and behaviour support plans in consultation with parents and other professionals. These meet the needs of each individual young person. When young people have exceptionally high care and support needs, the registered manager provides them with additional staff on a one young person to two beds arrangement. This enables staff, who would normally be allocated to the second bed, to care for one young person. Staff, who have in-depth knowledge of each young person, skilfully match them to maximise the social benefits for each young person, but also to ensure that young people do not harm each other and are safe.

The layout and maintenance of the building ensures that young people are safe while being given the freedom to move about to choose their activities and who they want to be with. The garden is shady and arranged so that young people can sit on the grass, play on the climbing frame or under the pergola and staff can see and monitor them at all times. The open-plan dining and living room has space to safely move wheelchairs and for staff to stand or sit with young people without causing an obstruction. Based on ongoing risk assessments for each young person, the external doors are kept locked to ensure that no unauthorised person can enter the building. However, children, young people and adults are not locked in. The high staffing levels ensure that staff can closely monitor young people. Health and safety risk assessments are in place, which staff regularly review and update.

Staff are trained around child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and how to respond if a young person goes missing. None of the young people has been subject to any of these risks. Staff are well trained in medical procedures and in lifting and moving young people. They safely undertake a number of highly sensitive and personal procedures including catheterisation and gastrostomy. Staff training addresses young people's sensory needs, their experiences and autism. This training enhances staff understanding of and skills in interacting with young people. They use this knowledge to help young people remain calm and to progress in managing their own anxieties and behaviours, thereby reducing risk.

When safety issues do arise, the registered manager responds quickly and effectively to ensure that young people are safe. She uses supervision and team meetings to ensure that she and the staff learn from incidents and can keep young people even safer. Parents and social workers consider that staff keep young people very safe and young people confirm that they feel safe here.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The registered manager has many years' experience of working with children and young people with challenging behaviour and severe learning difficulties. She holds a level 3 award in leadership and management and is undertaking her level 5 award. She has over 10 years' managerial experience, and has had management responsibility for this home since December 2014. Staff are either level 3 qualified or are undertaking the award. The majority of staff, and all shift leaders, are first-aid trained. The highly experienced and child-focused registered manager is innovative and diligent. She constantly works to drive up standards in the service. Since the last inspection, the registered manager has involved staff in undertaking sensory work and social stories with young people. Her future aims are to improve the service that the centre provides for young people who are moving from children's to adult services. Recent developments include designing and putting up the achievement tree and creating a new parents' booklet, which includes photographs and information about staff and what is happening at the centre. The registered manager is redesigning the children's guide by enlarging it to make it easier for young people to read. She has made improvements to the complaints information and has put a new system in place to monitor the progress of and outcomes for young people. Plans are in place to build a new playroom in the new year to provide young people with extra space and an alternative place to go if they feel anxious or need to be alone. The registered manager uses the staff's knowledge of the young people effectively to match young people for their short breaks. This close attention to young people's individual needs enhances their experiences by, for example, keeping them in a friendship group or matching them with just one other young person if they struggle in groups. Record keeping is clear, organised and up to date, and provides valuable information for staff to work effectively and safely with young people. The registered manager regularly reviews and updates policies and documentation to respond to changes in the service and the needs of young people. Staff benefit from regular supervision and team meetings, which are supportive and help to develop staff knowledge and skills. Staff feel confident to contribute ideas about learning needs and practice. Staff are up to date with their training, which is relevant and supports their work. Since the last inspection, the registered manager has commissioned training which	

enhances staff understanding of the young people's experiences and needs. This includes additional training in autism awareness, in communicating with young people and specialist training in managing diabetes and catheterisation. Staff are developing their work with social stories and have asked to have further training in this. The police have been to the centre to train staff about radicalisation and the registered manager has used the team meeting to focus on training around child sexual exploitation. In October, the registered manager invited parents of young people who have now moved on to adult services, to talk to the staff about their experiences of the transition from children's to adult services.

The registered manager reviews the service regularly and consults with parents, staff, young people and professionals. Consultation with parents includes questionnaires and feedback from the centre's parents' meetings, which occur once a month. Parents recently discussed the feedback form, which they have helped to redesign. The registered manager uses feedback from professionals obtained by the independent visitor in addition to that received when they visit the centre. This enables the registered manager to maximise the range of feedback that she uses to inform her reviews, for the benefit of the young people.

Staff provide consistent, skilled and experienced care under a strong leader and manager. Feedback from parents reflects this excellent work. One parent said, 'They keep me informed of (sic) everything about him and send photographs home with him, which show that he is happy on his break. We work together to move him on with his toileting. Without fail, they put everything in the diary, which goes with him to school and home, and I can see what he has done, eaten and when he has gone to [the] toilet. They work with health, school and the social worker together.'

A social worker praised the staff for the quality of their work, saying that this is 'an invaluable service, which is delivered to a very high standard'.

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 that 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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