

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	18/11/2015
Unique reference number	SC013743
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Action for Children
Registered person address	Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, WATFORD, WD18 8AG

Responsible individual	Michael O'Sullivan
Registered manager	Tracey Terry
Inspector	Trish Palmer

Inspection date	18/11/2015
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

SC013743

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people have developed good relationships with an enthusiastic and dedicated staff team.
- There is good communication between the staff and families.
- Staff know the young people well and can interpret their needs.
- Staff offer young people a wide variety of activities.
- Staff treat young people with dignity, respect and as individuals.
- Staff understand the importance of good transitions for both young people and families.
- Staff understand the importance of keeping young people safe.
- There are comprehensive risk assessments in place signed by parents.
- The home promotes independence according to young people's age, understanding and ability.

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
7. The children's views, wishes and feelings standard In order to meet the views wishes and feelings standard the registered person must (2)(a) ensure that staff— (ii) help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; (iv) regularly consult children, and seek their feedback,	12/1/16

about the quality of the home's care; this is in relation to young peoples meetings.	
11. The positive relationships standard In order to meet this standard the registered person must (2)(a)(xii) understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and (xiii) have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them.	12/1/16
13 The leadership and management standard In order to meet this standard the registered person must; (2)(ii) feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received.	12/1/16
Notice of changes 49. The registered person must give notice in writing to HMCI, as soon as it is reasonably practicable to do so, if any of the following events take place or are expected by the registered person to take place— (a) a person other than the registered person carries on or manages the children's home; (b) a person ceases to carry on or manage the home;	30/12/16

Recommendations

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

- All children must have access to appropriate advocacy support, and where possible this should be provided by a person that the child chooses. Looked-after children are entitled to an independent advocate to advise them and ensure they have the support needed to express their views, wishes and feelings about their care and lives. (Guide to Children's Homes Regulations, page 23, paragraph 4.16
- The children's guide should help children to understand: what the day to day routines of the home are ('what happens in the home'); (Guide to Children's Home Regulations, page 24, paragraph 4.22

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a charitable organisation and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 19 children; 15 children with learning disabilities and up to four places for children with a physical disability.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/12/2014	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
28/08/2014	CH - Full	Good
16/12/2013	CH - Interim	Satisfactory Progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
The young people have developed good relationships with an enthusiastic and dedicated staff team who know them well and understand their needs and abilities. Staff greeted young people on their return from school encouraging them to hang up their coats and asking them about their day. This supported some young people with the transition back into the home from school, as it was a familiar routine. One young person was becoming anxious as she has a review this week and was worried she would be leaving. Staff were observed reassuring her that she knew what was going to be discussed at the review and that she would not be leaving. This showed that staff have a good understanding of the young people and can show empathy and understanding when they become worried or upset. The young people appeared happy and relaxed around the staff and interaction was positive. Staff used appropriate humour with young people. Young people have planners so they are aware of what is happening that day. Staff complete an indoor and outdoor plan giving the young people a choice. Young people were observed in a variety of different activities in the home. Community activities include swimming, cinema, going out for meals. Some young people also attend clubs in the community such as Guides. Staff interact well with the young people and were able to interpret their individual wishes. One parent commented, 'X has had new experiences which has helped with her learning ability and helped her develop.' Another parent commented, 'X has lots of energy and needs physical activities as his behaviour can become difficult if he is bored, I have been able to discuss this with the staff'. A local volunteer brings a well-trained (pat) dog into the home once a month; staff reported that the young people really benefit from the dog's and her owner's visits. Staff listen to young people if they make a complaint and take them seriously, this is recorded on their daily sheets but not on a formal complaints form making it difficult to monitor how complaints are resolved. The young person's guide, using PECS, explains to young people how to complain. The guide does not explain the routine of the home so new young people may not know what happens during the day.	

Staff support young people to manage unwanted behaviour, the home uses defusing techniques and will use a one person approach to move children from harming others by guiding the young person and using distracting techniques. Staff report that this is very successful and there has not been any need for physical intervention for some considerable time.

Young people are not spoken to about possible bullying behaviours and there is no format to record issues of bullying, or potential bullying occurring in the home.

The home has a children's voice meeting once a month where one young person and a member of staff represents each unit. Discussions take place around fund raising and issues pertaining to the home as a whole. Young people are asked at the start of each meeting how they wish to communicate and this is then recorded. It is not clear how this is fed back to the other young people.

Staff involve young people in making decisions in each of the units and young people are clearly involved in choosing the décor and furnishings but the recording makes it difficult to see children's views and the outcomes. Staff spoken to were looking at ways in which these conversations can be recorded to show that young people's wishes and feelings are taken into account in a more formal setting. One young person proudly showed me her room saying that she had picked the paint, curtains and bedding'. She commented, 'I like coming up to my room it's nice and pink'.

The home has had several advocates coming into the home, so far these have not been successful as the advocates could not communicate with the young people and staff felt that as they were having to communicate it wasn't benefiting the young people. The manager and staff are looking at how this can be implemented more successfully.

There are good links with local schools and staff regularly attend school meetings and reviews. The home and school also work together on setting targets for young people to ensure that they are working together. A member of staff has been assigned to work with schools around communication methods used by individual young people so they can work together in supporting them.

One young person is currently out of school due to anxiety issues leading to self-harming behaviours. The home is working closely with the school to reintegrate him back. Teachers from the school are visiting him to maintain relationships. The social worker and the British Institute for Learning Disabilities are also working with the home in supporting this young person.

The young people are supported in learning independence according to their age, ability and level of understanding. Young people are progressing but in some cases it is difficult to follow the progression, the manager has recently produced a

format for staff to complete. This breaks down the target and shows progression and completion. One parent commented, 'X has progressed so much, I couldn't ask for more.' Another commented, 'X's skill set has improved and he's learnt to do more things independently than he would have done at home.'

Staff are incredibly proud of all the young people's achievements and are currently looking at how these can be celebrated with all the young people.

The young people are registered with local health professionals and are supported by staff to attend routine health appointments. Staff work with more specialised health professionals to be able to manage the more complex health needs. There is a comprehensive health plan in place which is signed by the young person's GP and parent.

Staff understand that transitions for young people vary. Transitions into and leaving the home are managed in consultation with social workers and parents. One parent commented, 'I felt that the transition was moving too quickly for us. I spoke to the staff and we slowed it down, I felt that I was listened to.' Staff are aware that for some young people the transition going to and from school can be difficult; by developing good routines with the young people they are helped to feel safe. One parent commented, 'I was really scared about X going into a home as you hear stories, but I am very impressed and I don't want him to leave now.'

Staff understand the importance of contact with family and friends and support this to happen. One parent commented, 'I am always made to feel welcome when I go to the home. Another commented, 'we have a lot of family visiting X and we are always accommodated and made to feel welcome.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The young people live in a safe environment; there is appropriate security on doors and windows and social workers regularly visit young people. Health and safety checks are completed by the maintenance person and are up to date. He also liaises with contractors when they are on site in order to safeguard the young people and completes maintenance around the home. One young person is displaying self-harming behaviours, a plan has been completed with staff and his social worker, due to him banging his head his	

bedroom furniture has been removed into the spare room next door and soft padding has been installed. Staff will take him into the spare room so that he can still choose his clothes; a spare lounge has also been padded out so that he can have time on his own in a safe environment. This plan is reviewed with the social worker weekly. The British Institute of Learning Disabilities are also supporting staff at looking how to manage his behaviour safely.

Young people all have personal emergency evacuation plans in place and staff carry out routine fire evacuations with them.

Young people have not gone missing from this service for some considerable time, staff spoken to were very clear about the policies and procedures in place and how to respond if a young person went missing.

Risk assessments are comprehensive and also cover activities in the community. The staffing ratio is high which supports safeguarding the young people. Parents and social workers have also signed to say they are in agreement with the risk assessments.

Staff supervise young people using the internet. There is a policy in place and staff have a good understanding of safeguarding issues.

There are good concise behaviour plans in place, which have been signed by parents and social workers. These contain information regarding triggers and defusing techniques. All incidents are recorded and monitored by the manager. Risk assessments are updated if needed.

Since the last inspection there have been two issues of staff not following the homes medication policy. Both incidents were reported to Local Authorities Designated Officer (LADO), social workers and parents and staff were dealt with appropriately. The medication policy has now been updated and includes two members of staff having to sign off medication. Staff spoken to were clear about the new policy. Medication is appropriately stored and team leaders complete a monthly medication audit.

The home has good links with LADO who commented they had no concerns with the home and that they report concerns appropriately.

Recruitment is robust. All checks are completed before staff commence work and a record of these are kept in the home. Parents were involved with the interviewing of the new manager.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
The current manager leaves her post this week and a new manager has been appointed. Ofsted had not been informed and this needs to be completed. The home is well resourced and staffed. Any agency staff used are seen as part of the staff team and receive supervision. The home also follows up checks completed by the agency in order to ensure that young people are safeguarded by rigorous vetting. There are monitoring systems in place but these are not always easy to follow. The new manager is looking at how these can be improved so that the progress of children is easily identified. Although staff report that young people wishes and feelings are listened to and taken into account and young people say that staff listen to them it is difficult to see how young people views listened to, actioned and the outcomes. The frequency of supervision has improved since the last inspection. The quality of some supervisions still needs to improve, this has been raised through the Regulation 44 visits and as a result training for staff who supervise will commence in December. There are regular staff meetings which staff say that they find useful and supportive. There are good concise individual placement plans in place which are in line with the placing authorities care plan. Staff spoken to understand and follow these. Parents and social workers have also signed to say they are in agreement with the plan. The managers and staff have good relationships with young people's families, a parent commented, 'they keep me updated and explain things to me, I couldn't be happier.' Another commented, 'staff follow X's ethnic background which is really good as its part of his identity.' There are clear daily recordings in place along with contact sheets from parents or other professionals. Managers have been able to identify weaknesses within the home and are working towards making improvements with the support from a dedicated staff team.	

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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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