

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC025395
Inspector	Nick Veysey
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Nugent Care
Registered person address	99 Edge Lane Edge Hill Liverpool L7 2PE

Responsible individual	David Michael Ballard
Registered manager	Benedicte McKeown
Date of last inspection	28/03/2014

Inspection date	28/01/2015
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	None

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	outstanding
Leadership and management	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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Children and young people with a wide range of complex needs live in an exceptionally warm and supportive environment. They feel safe and loved. A young boy whispered to another boy, 'tell him it's good here.' Another young person said, 'the staff give you support and they take steps to help me improve.'

They are provided with understanding, stability and emotional security that enables them to achieve excellent outcomes. They enjoy trusting relationships with staff. They have a strong sense of safety and are protected from significant harm. Staff actively and effectively support children and young people when they experience difficulties and struggle to manage their feelings.

Parents, social workers and health visitors are exceptionally happy with the quality of care and the support their children receive from the staff. Young people's needs and views are central to the running of the home. Staff actively encourage all young people to become more involved in making choices and decisions about their lives, and to develop their independence and have aspirations.

Staff are very committed and show an exceptionally high level of skill, understanding and knowledge in meeting young people's complex needs on a daily basis. Staff have high aspirations for all the children and young people and work strenuously to

promote young people's personal growth, and social and emotional development. They use reflective practice critically and high quality training to improve their practice and develop their skills.

Children and young people's care is effectively planned and put into practice. It is precisely tailored to comprehensively meet the individual needs of each child and young person and take into account their characters, circumstances and disabilities. Staff actively work in a coordinated way with children and young people, their family, social workers, health professionals and schools. This ensures that young people continue to get the right help, guidance and advice.

The manager provides strong leadership and works hard to improve the quality of care and support. She fully understands the strengths of the service and effectively uses the quality assurance systems to develop the service further. There is a strong emphasis on providing a very high standard of care and childcare practice.

Children and young people do not always get the information they need to help them understand how their complaints have been investigated and addressed. Also, when children and young people have been missing they do not have the opportunity to talk about what happened with a person independent of the home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home is run by a charitable organisation. It cares for up to 25 children and young people. The home is divided into two houses close by one another. One house specialises in caring for children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties and also provides care and accommodation to young mothers and their babies. The other house cares for children and young people with learning disabilities and autism.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
09/01/2014	Full	outstanding
07/03/2013	Interim	good progress
14/01/2013	Full	good

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

Recommendations

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

- ensure children receive prompt and clear feedback about the outcome of any complaint or concerns they have raised and are kept informed of the progress of the enquiries into their concerns (NMS 1.6)
- ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing, he or she is offered an independent return interview. The interview should be carried out within 72 hours of the child returning to the home. This should be an in-depth interview and is normally best carried out by an independent person (someone not involved in caring for the child) who is trained to carry out these interviews and is able to follow up any actions that emerge. (Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, January 2014, paragraphs 31 & 32)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Children and young people are making exceptional progress in all areas of their lives. A young person who had recently left the home wrote, 'I lived there for four years and I can honestly say it was one of the most positive and life changing experiences of my life. It changed my life for the best. The staff have been there in every way. They gave me advice when I needed it and were always there when I needed to talk or even when I needed a hug.'

Children and young people are making significant and continuous improvements in their behaviour, health, education, quality of contact with their family, independence and confidence in taking part in a wider range of activities in the community. Overall, children and young people are not involved in behaviour that may be harmful to their welfare. They usually do not go missing from care and are managing their anxieties and frustrations constructively. They feel able to accept the care, support and guidance available to them. The risks to their safety and welfare have significantly reduced enabling them to start to fulfil their potential, enjoy their childhood, and achieve better life chances.

Children and young people have a strong sense of belonging and safety. As a result they are growing in confidence, feel emotionally secure, and more able to build and maintain positive relationships. They face challenges in their lives with resilience, including living away from their family, moving into a new home, starting new schools and caring for their babies. A health visitor said, 'Babies have strong attachments with their mothers. Their mothers are providing them with a high standard of care and they are developing exceptionally well.' A social worker said, 'it's a smashing placement for (young person). Staff have done a great job in settling him in and his challenging behaviour has lessened because of the strategies staff have used. He is learning to think before he acts and talk to staff about his feelings.' Another a social worker said '(young person) has come a long way, he is not as aggressive, his outbursts are less frequent and not as volatile' and that another young person 'now has very few outbursts and if he does he comes down really quickly.'

Overall children and young people enjoy school and the level of attendance is exceptional. They are making excellent progress in developing their knowledge and confidence in their skills. They are well settled in school and feeling more able to interact with other young people. They play an active part in school life, including playing football for the school team and going on school trips and holidays. They all work really hard, produce some excellent work and are achieving formal qualifications, including GCSEs and older children are attending college. A school reported that a young person 'was working hard, a good role model to younger students and continues to work with teachers to maximise her achievements.'

Children and young people are well prepared for independence and adult life. They are becoming more independent appropriate to their abilities and level of understanding. For example, they are routinely involved in the running of the house; this includes going shopping, helping to prepare meals and tidying-up, helping with the laundry and using money. One young person made tea for the staff and other young people. She said, 'it was tiring peeling all the potatoes, but I enjoy cooking and the meal everyone liked the meal.'

Children and young people participate in the decisions that affect their lives appropriate to their age and level of understanding. They make day-to-day choices about what they have to eat, how they want the house decorated and what they do in their spare time. They also understand and accept that their wishes cannot always be met because staff always clearly explain the reasons. They also make more complex decisions about the support they receive, when they want to see their family and the plans for their future.

Children and young people enjoy very good health and well-being. They make positive choices that promote better health outcomes. They enjoy healthy diets and plenty of physical exercise, for example going to the running, horse riding, swimming, playing football and other sports, and long bike rides. Young people are making excellent recoveries from serious illnesses. They understand about the importance of healthy lifestyles and key health risks and take responsibility for their own personal care, including children and young people with disabilities. For example, they are developing more independence with their personal care, learning to shave themselves, and taking the initiative about when they need to have a bath. Young mothers show a very good understanding of their babies' health needs and take responsibility for their care and development, including attending regular appointments with the health visitor.

Children and young people routinely take part a full range of stimulating and enjoyable activities. A child said, 'the staff are really caring and take time out for you. They also take us out to places I have never been.' They especially enjoy listening to music, dancing, playing the guitar, martial arts, going to the theatre, cinema, ice skating, shopping and for meals out. They have the same opportunities as other children to explore the world they live in, follow their interests, and develop their talents. They take part in a wide range of organised activities, including Air Cadets, Brownies, youth clubs, and training with a local football team. Activities in the community have helped young people feel more confident and comfortable around other people and develop a clearer understanding how to act appropriately. They get plenty of opportunities to develop their confidence and social skills by getting chances to meet new people and make friends outside home and school.

Children and young people benefit from regular and appropriate contact with their families and friends. This is enabling them to maintain and build stronger relationships with the people who are important in their lives. A number of children and young people stay overnight with their families. They look forward to seeing their

family and spending time with them. Staff work really hard to ensure that children and young people find seeing their families a safe and enjoyable experience. Staff are very aware that young people and their families sometimes may find seeing each other stressful and make sure they are suitably and sensitively supported. They have built very good relationships with families that supports regular and high quality contact.

Quality of care

outstanding

Children and young people receive an exceptional quality of care that is making a positive difference to their lives. They live in a warm, friendly, nurturing and stimulating environment. The clear routines help children and young people feel safe and secure. They know what is happening, who is looking after them and what is expected of them. They show resilience and can cope well with changes to plans because staff help them understand why things have changed. Parents, health visitors and social workers are extremely positive about the quality of support that the staff provide. A parent said, 'it is excellent and I know she is safe. They look after her well.' A health visitor said 'young mothers are very well supported being taught how to care for their babies. The young mothers who have moved on are very positive about the care and support they got at the home.'

The well-being of individual children and young people is firmly at the centre of staff's practice. They have consistently high aspirations and are committed to enabling young people to maximise their potential, regardless of the complexities of their needs. They are very interested in the welfare of children and young people they look after. They work tirelessly to help young people overcome any difficulties they may face to lead happy and fulfilling lives. Staff are very knowledgeable about individual children and young people's needs and circumstances. As a result they ensure that young people receive exceptional individual support and guidance. Staff are highly skilled and competent at building strong and trusting relationships with young people and helping them feel valued and cared for as individuals. Young people said, 'staff are caring and always have a laugh', 'they help you when you are down and they understand how you are feeling and listen to you' and 'staff help me when I need them.'

The manager and staff plan for children and young people's care and accommodation exceedingly well. Placement plans provide a detailed and comprehensive picture of all their personal needs and the support they require. Staff put young people's plans into practice effectively to ensure young people's specific needs are met on a day-to-day basis. Care plans and staff's routine practice recognises young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. Staff ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs, disability, cultural background and identity. Staff work exceptionally well in partnership with young people, parents, social workers, health visitors, child and adolescent mental health services and schools to promote young people's welfare.

Staff have established excellent communication with social workers and other services. The manager and staff actively contribute to the reviews of young people's plans. The staff provide evaluative reports about young people's progress that add to the understanding of young people's lives and future needs. The written reports provide a very detailed picture of young people's lives and the support they need.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. Young people have easy access to community health services. Staff have an excellent understanding of young people's specific health needs and have received relevant training, including in specialist health tasks, to ensure young people's needs are met. They closely monitor young people to make sure they are healthy, encouraging them to attend routine health checks. They also ensure young people get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling unwell or showing signs of distress. Staff have established strong links with the specialist health services supporting young people. They will actively challenge health professionals to ensure that children and young people get the support and treatment they require. The arrangements for managing medication is safe and ensures children and young people always get the medicines they need.

Staff have created a stimulating environment that promotes children and young people's learning and development. Staff ensure that the daily routine supports participation in education and school attendance. Some children have to travel long distances, including on public transport, and are never late for school. Children and young people have easy access to books, computers, art materials, board games and other educational resources. The staff fully understand each child and young person's educational needs, progress and goals. Staff have established very strong links with schools. They support children and young people with homework, attend parents' evening and school events, including watching children playing football for the school team. Some young people struggle with their education, but staff work effectively with teachers to challenge and to try to overcome any barriers to young people's full participation in education.

Young people live in suitably designed and comfortable houses in quiet residential neighbourhoods. The houses are handy for the shops, parks, beach and community amenities. The houses are clean and suitably decorated to reflect individual children and young people's personalities and tastes. Young people's bedrooms are designed and furnished to meet any specific needs they may have in relation to their needs, health and disability.

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

Children and young people live in an extremely safe environment and are protected from harm. The staff give young people's safety the highest priority and follow excellent safe care practices. They are well trained in safeguarding and are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse, including the risks relating to sexual

abuse and exploitation. They take suitable steps to protect young people and promptly report any concerns about young people's welfare. They have strong working relationships with social workers, the police and other safeguarding agencies.

Children and young people feel safe and that the staff care about them and are interested in their welfare. They feel comfortable talking to staff about any concerns they may have and feel confident that they will be listened to and taken seriously. Children and young people know how to complain and raise issues and regularly see a children's rights worker. Their complaints are always looked into and usually resolved. On one occasion a young person said 'I don't know what happened about the complaint I made.' She had not been told the outcome of the manager's investigation and this was causing her some anxiety.

The staff have a very clear understanding of young people's vulnerabilities and risks they may face. Children and young people's individual care plans up to date, clearly identify any risks and outline effective strategies to ensure their welfare is promoted and protected. Staff ensure these plans are consistently put into practice and fully address children and young people's needs. They ensure young people are safe at the home and in the community. They effectively balance the need for protection with enabling young people to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development.

Children and young people's behaviour is usually very good. A relative said, 'there has been a great improvement in (young person's) behaviour. I can't praise the staff enough for the support and help we receive.' They do not experience bullying and usually do not engage in harmful behaviour. Staff have developed an excellent understanding of the times and factors that contribute to children and young people becoming upset. They closely monitor young people's behaviour and recognise when they are struggling to manage their anxieties and frustrations. They intervene effectively to find out what the problem is and provide young people with reassurance and excellent support. The staff work closely with children and young people, schools and therapists to devise strategies to help children manage their feelings and behaviour. Children and young people tell staff what helps them when they are angry, for example, to be left alone to calm down or to go for a walk in the garden. This forms the basis for the strategies and staff creatively help children to understand and manage their feelings, including reflecting on what they can do differently when they get upset.

There is a strong emphasis of managing young people's behaviour calmly and safely to prevent the need to use restraint. Staff use restraint suitably and only as a permissible form of control, for example, to prevent young people from being injured. The restraint records provide a detailed picture of the incident and analysis of the effectiveness of the restraint. This information enables the manager and staff to monitor effectively the use of restraint, reflect on what happened and work out how best to support young people when they are upset in the future. This excellent use of

reflective practice has enabled staff to manage difficult situations more effectively and support young people to manage their feelings more constructively. For some young people the impact of their disabilities means that at times they struggle to manage their anxieties and frustrations. As a result they become upset and show risky behaviour. Staff manage these occasions extremely well and support young people effectively to overcome the problems they are facing. This is not always easy, but staff work hard to find out what is wrong and adapt their approach effectively to reassure the young person and deal with the problem. Staff have developed creative ways to help young people understand the world around them and how to interact with other people appropriately.

Children and young people rarely go missing from the home or school. On the occasions they have the staff have worked effectively with the police, British Transport police and social workers to find them quickly. They are always warmly welcomed home; but they do not have the opportunity to talk in depth to an independent person about what had happened and the reasons for running away. This would provide useful information that can help to understand the potential and actual risks involved and protect children and young people from going missing.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is very thorough to make sure children and young people are protected. The manager carefully ensures that staff have the right knowledge, skills, motivation, values and competencies to meet the needs of individual young people. Children and young people are protected from any hazards by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills with young people, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency.

Leadership and management

outstanding

Children and young people live in highly effective and efficiently managed children's home. Every effort is made to ensure they receive the best possible care to support their complex needs, promote their well-being, and achieve better outcomes. The Registered Manager is very experienced and suitably qualified. She has managed the home for over 30 years and continued to develop her professional knowledge and skills. She is a strong and compassionate leader who promotes a strong commitment in staff to deliver exceptional childcare practice tailored to the personal needs of the young people. This ethos is thoroughly embedded throughout the home. The effectiveness of this approach is very evident in the excellent progress children and young people are making, regardless of their circumstances and previous experiences.

The manager and leaders use effective monitoring to understand the strengths of the service and identify areas for development. She makes good use of reflective practice, the views of children and young people external services and families to

improve practice ensure children and young people's needs are appropriately met. For example, she has listened to the young mothers' views about being able to take part in a wider range of activities. Also, she has identified that a piece of work needs to be carried out with younger children about how to better involve them in decisions about their futures. The manager and leaders also develop their practice by learning lessons from serious incidents; for example working with drugs services to develop expertise and understanding about the risks of 'legal highs.' The home shows the capacity to improve based on the progress the young people have made to date.

Children and young people are looked after by exceptionally enthusiastic and caring people. The staff team are very experienced, qualified, highly competent and skilled. They are committed to the children and young people they work with regardless of the challenges. They love their jobs and continue to enjoy coming into work. They are resilient and provide children and young people with consistency in a stable home environment. The skills within the staff team match children and young people's needs exceptionally well. They have specific training and expertise in the specific areas they work; for example working with younger children, teenagers, mothers and babies or autism. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to promote young people's safety and welfare in the best possible way. Staff are very well supported by the manager. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the high expectations for providing excellent childcare. They routinely receive effective, professional supervision. They confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always available and helpful, especially when they have been involved in challenging situations.

Children and young people's written records show a detailed picture of young people's experiences and progress. They include a narrative of young people's daily lives, staff observations of young people's mood and behaviour and analysis of their progress. These comprehensive records provide an insight and understanding of young people's lives and contribute to the planning for their futures. They are presented imaginatively with lots of photographs showing young people's experiences and activities. This helps children young people to remember their experiences and see what they have achieved.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.