

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	18/11/2015
Unique reference number	SC030439
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Somerset County Council
Registered person address	County Hall, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4DY

Responsible individual	Robert Eveleigh
Registered manager	Stephen Mullins
Inspector	Janice Hawtin

Inspection date	18/11/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Declined in 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

SC030439

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Leaders and managers have a clear and informed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Since the previous inspection several improvements to the home and to the quality of care are benefiting children. Development plans are in place and improvement work is on-going.
- Children and young people living in this home and those attending for short breaks make gradual and sustained good progress. The young people who live in the home full time have made exceptional progress over a period of years. A parent described her child as 'a different boy, he is much happier and less anxious, I am so grateful to the staff here for their care of him, he is no longer self-harming or aggressive, all the difficult behaviour has stopped'.
- Children and young people are safe. They do not go missing and risks are considered and included as part of care planning. Staff members understand how disability and communication needs impact on children's and young people's behaviour. Managers and members of the staff team consider every incident to encourage learning and to see if things can be done differently.
- Arrangements to move young people to adult services are carefully considered and well planned. Despite young people's learning or communication difficulties, the staff members find imaginative ways of consulting with them and keeping them informed about plans. All children and young people are considered able to make choices.
- Arrangements for the support, supervision, and development of members of the staff team are effective. Supervision is provided on a regular basis and all members of staff have an annual appraisal of their work practice. This includes setting personal development targets. Training and support for the staff is readily available so that they are equipped with the skills and guidance needed to care effectively for children and young people.

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
45: Review of quality of care The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children at least once every six months and supply a copy of the care review report to Ofsted within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45(1),(4)(a))	31/12/2015

Recommendations

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

The registered person should support staff to be ambitious for every child in the home and to gain skills and experience to that enables them to actively support each child to achieve their potential. In particular ensure that staff handover meetings include care planning, attention to young people's targets and links to activities. (Guide to the children's homes regulations page 52 paragraph 10.5)

Ensure that as set out in regulation 31 to 33, the registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risk to them. In particular, that all references meet the standards required of safer recruitment practice. (Guide to the children's home regulations page 61 paragraph 13.1)

Ensure that any decision to limit children's access to all parts of the home is only made where this is intended to safeguard children's welfare. Any decision to limit access should be informed by rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. In particular ensure children have access to the safe outside areas and gardens of the home. (Guide to the children's home regulations page 15 paragraph 3.10)

Ensure that staff keep and encourage children to keep appropriate memorabilia of the time spent living at the home and help them record significant life events.(Guide to the children's home regulations page 62 paragraph 14.5)

Ensure children have access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning, unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why this would be inappropriate. In such cases, the home should consider whether and how it can support the child to access a computer and the internet safely. (Guide to the children's home regulations page 29 paragraph 5.19)

Ensure that all members of the staff team are familiar with the homes policy on record keeping and Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. In particular ensure that care planning includes targets for development and regular review of progress. Also detail evidence of risk to see if they persist and to allow effective review. (Guide to the children's home regulations page 62 paragraph 14.4)

Ensure that all adults working in the home provide a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of the children, this will, in most cases, be a homely and domestic environment. In particular ensure that young people spending time in the home on a short breaks basis have personalised and cosy bedrooms where possible (Guide to the children's home regulations page 15 paragraph 3.9)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered as a Children's Homes providing short breaks for children with physical and learning difficulties.

The home is owned and managed by a local authority and the majority of the children accommodated are from the local area.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/02/2015	CH - Interim	Declined in effectiveness
16/09/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
10/03/2014	CH - Interim	Satisfactory Progress
21/11/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
All children and young people living in or spending short breaks in this home have complex needs. They will require lifelong support and guidance from other people. This does not deter the staff teams from having high expectations and aspirations for children and young people. There is a focus in this home on reducing unacceptable behaviour and introducing or improving independence skills. The care provided by the adults working in the home impacts positively on the progress and experiences of children and young people. Several have made exceptional progress over a period of years and others, attending for short breaks, make notable progress in a short space of time. For some this has been life changing. From having very difficult behaviour to manage, they are now more able to go out in the community and spend time back in their family home with minimal support. Children and young people benefit from the activities on offer. The home is equipped with an arts and crafts room, sensory room and projections cinema facilities. In addition, community facilities are also used. Children and young people are encouraged to participate in these activities which include attending after schools club. One young person benefits from playing cricket with friends, another enjoys walking and shopping. All children and young people attend school or further education facilities. A variety of communication methods are used by the staff team to ensure children and young people have opportunities to understand and communicate. These include picture symbols and sign language. Children and young people do not currently have access to a computer and the internet. This lessens their opportunities for learning and exploring the wider world. The manager and key workers attend multi-agency planning meetings and reviews. Sharing information and the discussions in these reviews about what works for children and young people allows for planning and target setting. The staff teams work well together and promote improvement across a variety of settings. Conversely, the same good planning does not happen during daily shift changes in the home. Careful planning of moves to adult services takes place and helps young people to	

understand what is going to happen for them. Arrangements have been made for future care staff to spend time in this home. This allows them to get to know a young person and how the current staff team look after her. The young person has photographs of all the new staff members and picture story boards are produced each day to let her know what is happening.

The leaders manage emergency placements without any impact on current residents. A self-contained flat is attached to the home and can be staffed separately. Where the manager has determined that those placed in the home in an emergency would not benefit from long-term placements he has acted quickly to secure an appropriate alternative.

The home has been updated in recent months. It has been decorated throughout and some additional art work made by children and young people is displayed alongside their photographs. Not all areas of the home are cosy and welcoming. Some children and young people have personalised space, while for others their bedrooms are unnecessarily sparse and lack homely touches such as rugs or personal possessions.

Not all children and young people have important memorabilia maintained in addition to the photographs of their time in the home. As a result, there is a danger of this history being lost.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The staff members pay attention to understanding behaviour and this contributes to children and young people feeling safe and secure. Clear boundaries and a consistent way of working reduce anxiety for children and young people which in turn, moderates difficult behaviour. Members of the staff team are attentive to the needs of those they look after and suitable staffing numbers support the safety and welfare of children and young people. Children and young people do not go missing from this home neither do they engage in criminal behaviour that would warrant police intervention. Behaviour management focuses on distraction, occupying young people, and giving praise. Given that the young people would have little understanding of sanctions,	

these are not used. Physical interventions are kept to a minimum. For the most part they are used to break away from unacceptable holds by children and/or to guide them to safety. Records of restraint are accurate and detailed. The manager has oversight of these records and reflects with members of staff about the incident. This allows for the staff member to consider if anything could have been done differently to ensure the use of any intervention is effective.

The manager has stopped any new referrals to the home in order to avoid the difficulties with recruiting suitably experienced staff impacting negatively on the care and safety of children and young people.

The staff team's good attention to health and safety checks avoids children and young people being exposed to unnecessary risk. A fire officer has approved evacuation plans so that all staff members know what to do in an emergency and can get everybody out of the building quickly.

All members of the staff team receive safeguarding training and understand the additional risk factors associated with children and young people who have additional or complex needs. They make referrals to and work in partnership with specialist agency where additional risks or concerns are identified.

Many of the children and young people have little or no concept of danger. Doors to the main entrance and front doors to the homes are kept locked to keep them safe. Some unnecessary restrictions are in place and several doors leading to secure outside areas and gardens were also locked.

The adults working in the home are skilled at detecting when a child or young person is becoming distressed. They describe a young person making a particular sound when anxious (which to most people would be indistinguishable from other communication). They are able to respond effectively and avoid incidents of aggression. Children and young people have individual risks assessments that members of staff update regularly. These assessments provide information about how to manage behaviours and include particular triggers which may promote a negative response. The staff members can then avoid these if possible.

A mother said 'all the difficult behaviour has stopped, he used to run in the road, into shops, take all his clothes off, and he was very compulsive and used to self-harm'.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The registered manager has not provided a report to Ofsted (in line with the Children's Home Regulations 2015) summarising his monitoring of the quality of care. These reports enable valuable independent quality assurance. They contribute to ensuring the home is operating appropriately, and that action is taken as necessary. Shift handover discussions between members of the staff team lack purposeful planning. Children and young people's targets are not highlighted or linked to activities. Individual responsibilities are not allocated, which leaves some work practice to chance. Opportunities to ensure that children and young people's progress is maximised may be missed. Records do not consistently provide up-to-date information about children and young people. For example, care plans do not contain details of targets or progress they make. As a result, it is difficult to review and ensure continuous achievements for children and young people. Details of children and young people's ongoing difficult behaviour and the dates incidents last occurred are missing from risk assessments making it hard to review these plans effectively. Not all recruitment records include two suitable references for new members of staff. On several occasions the manager has not sought an additional reference to compensate for those which only provide confirmation of a candidate's date of employment. This weakness compromises what is otherwise safer recruitment practice intended to protect children and young people. The registered manager has suitable qualifications and sufficient experience to manage this home effectively. Leaders and managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Development planning includes a live document that is added to as weaknesses are identified. The weaknesses evident during this inspection are already noted for improvement and tasks to improve records are partly completed. The statement of purpose is up to date. It provides clear and understandable information that sets out how the home functions and the services it provides. This document is readily available to parents and others who may be interested. The children's guide is available in several different formats making it meaningful to	

children who have a range of different abilities.

Attention to the requirements and recommendations at the previous inspection has led to many improvements. Supervision and appraisal for members of staff is provided regularly and the format includes consideration of, and discussions about, their work with children and young people. This allows for development and training needs to be identified.

The staff team receive the support, guidance and training needed to understand the needs of the children they care for. The training provided includes both essential (first aid and safeguarding), and specialist (attachment and conscious parenting) courses. Most training is provided on a repeating programme so initial courses and refreshers are available to all staff members within a suitable time scale.

Members of staff's effective relationships with parents and a range of professionals support the safety and progress of children and young people. Managers and the staff team will arrange and take children and young people to medical appointments where parents are unable to. The staff team has contact with dentists and opticians who are able to deal with children and young people with complex needs.

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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