

SC030967

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides accommodation for up to eight children and young people who have learning disabilities. It is owned and operated by a local authority.

Inspection dates: 11 to 12 September 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 28 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Children and young people's day-to-day experiences and future life

opportunities are enhanced as they make outstanding progress in developing social and life skills.

- Children and young people thrive and have fun as they are empowered to participate in inclusive activities which enrich their lives.
- The consistent implementation of excellent behaviour management techniques empowers children and young people to learn self-protection and coping skills.
- An inspirational management team leads a passionate, skilled and enthusiastic staff team.
- Excellent collaborative working between the home, parents and all partner agencies ensures consistent and positive outcomes for children and young people.
- There were no breaches of regulation identified at this inspection.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
24/08/2016	Full	Outstanding
19/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/09/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people are provided with an excellent range of stimulating activities in comfortable surroundings on their short breaks or while living in this home. Each bedroom is equipped and decorated to individual taste, allowing children and young people to feel secure. The sense of belonging that this engenders allows children and young people to blossom as they build trusting attachments with staff and friendships with each other. Children and young people thrive as a result of the consistent and nurturing care that they receive. They thoroughly enjoy their time at the home, where they are empowered to take safe risks and develop their interests. Children and young people are happy and fulfilled, which enhances their social skills while improving their quality of life. A parent said, '[Name] has a life now thanks to [home's name]. I think they are more than outstanding here. There should be a judgement for superb because that's what they are.'

Exceptional care planning details every aspect of a child or young person's diverse needs and how that is to be achieved. Photographs are taken of every success and key workers carefully monitor progress. By linking achievements to their Asdan targets, children and young people receive certificates, which they take great pride in taking home to their families. In addition, the introduction of 'WOW' sheets, when a child or young person develops a new skill, gives them and their families a permanent recorded reminder of the steps they are taking. Children and young people learn independence and self-care skills in line with their abilities. They make significant progress in all aspects of their lives, whether it be sleeping through the night, using cutlery to eat their meals, or being able to tolerate spending time with their peers.

Children, young people and their parents enjoy exceptional relationships with the nurturing and skilled staff team. These trusting bonds empower children and young people to grow and develop new skills at their own pace. Parents have complete confidence in the staff to care for their children well. This promotes partnership working that benefits children and young people, as lessons learned while on their breaks can be taken back to their family home. A parent said, 'There is nothing more they could do to make things better for him. They are the best thing that has happened in [Name's] life, because he's starting to get some independence skills like putting his own clothes on because they are so patient with him. They are definitely outstanding here.'

The nurturing, experienced and skilled staff demonstrate an exceptional commitment and enthusiasm for their roles. They take on responsibility for different areas that will enhance children and young people's lives and contribute towards the outstanding progress children and young people make, for example developing the outcomes and 'WOW' sheets, the Asdan programme and the communication profiles. A social worker said, 'The resources are complemented by the dedicated staff who support not only children but families to make progress.'

The majority of children and young people attending the home do so for a short break, therefore their parents remain responsible for their education and health outcomes. Nevertheless, the staff work closely with education providers to ensure that the same

methods of communication are used and targets worked towards. This ensures consistent messages for children and young people empowering them to thrive.

Children and young people's individual health needs and learning disabilities are very carefully planned for. Some young people have complex health conditions necessitating daily medication. Excellent procedures ensure that these medications are administered without concern or risk. Children and young people's emotional health and well-being significantly improve as they enjoy their time in the home, building lasting friendships and learning social and life skills. A social worker said, 'Staff work very closely with parents and carers in promoting sleep. Parents listen more to [home's name], which knows the children better than the community nurses or us. So there has been some really, really good progress in sleeping that is transferred to home.'

The majority of children and young people who use this service have limited, or no, verbal communication skills. Outstanding staff members have developed individual communication profiles for each child, ensuring that their wishes and feelings are captured. All information, from the children's guide to menus and greetings, are available in written word, pictorial, Makaton and voice systems. These include small hand-held devices that say specific words such as hello, goodbye and thank you, so that children and young people can 'say' these words if they wish. As a result of this exceptional practice, children and young people grow in confidence to express themselves, which boosts their self-esteem and social skills.

Enabling and encouraging children and young people to participate in inclusive activities in the community is a major strength in this home. Children and young people take part in such diverse activities as wheelchair ice skating and attending musical theatre. These experiences broaden their horizons and would not have otherwise have been available to them. A parent said, 'I felt such a failure letting him come here, but it is the best thing for him. He will eat breakfast with his little friend, and he won't even eat in the same room as us at home. He's actually having a social life and he's 14 and so he should be able to have a social life.'

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Extensive generic and individual risk assessments ensure that all hazards faced by children and young people are known and planned for. Parents are actively involved in agreeing proposed actions to safeguard children and young people, who are protected by these measures. One social worker commented, 'The mixture of positive risk taking and safety is considered well.' Another said that, 'The home has an excellent safety record and I have no concerns regarding my young people in placement.'

Children and young people do not experience any bullying, as high staffing levels and the proactive actions taken by staff to build relationships and prevent such behaviours protect the children and young people. However, the proactive manager and staff team are aware that children and young people are vulnerable to bullying in other settings and so work hard with them to understand how to protect themselves and not to become bullies. The innovative use of visual stimulation, such as the 'pinky promise' and the 'safe hands tree', empowers children and young people to develop this understanding.

There have not been any missing episodes from the home as a result of appropriate

safety measures and the high staffing levels. The management team ensures that all staff understand the risks posed to vulnerable children and young people of sexual exploitation and grooming. This provides effective safeguards.

The well-trained and enthusiastic staff team effectively applies behaviour management plans extremely well. Due to children and young people's level of understanding, sanctions are not used. Instead, they each receive points as rewards for good behaviours, which are traded for a gift of their choice. Rewards can be for simple things such as going for walks, picking meal choices, engaging in picnics with their peers, or learning to ride the trike and scooter. Children and young people learn invaluable social and life skills while they understand the benefits of behaving appropriately and having fun.

Children and young people's learning disabilities, or the onset of puberty leading to impulsive behaviours, mean that they can become aggressive. The effective implementation of up-to-date behaviour management systems to deflect such behaviours has had a significant impact. The use of physical intervention has dramatically reduced to just six restraints since the last inspection. In addition, much-improved recording after each event ensures that all those involved learn from the experience. A parent said, '[Name] can be quite aggressive at times and staff manage and divert this very well. He needs constant supervision. The staff are fantastic and I feel he is totally safe in their care.'

Excellent safeguarding procedures ensure that staff know exactly what to do if there were to be a child protection concern. The manager and staff are fully aware that some of the children and young people in their care could be susceptible to grooming as they wish to belong in their community. Staff are well trained in identifying and addressing the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. This knowledge, and the work undertaken with children and young people to build their feelings of self-esteem and self-worth, protect them. A social worker reported, 'I am impressed with the child-centred approach by all the staff, whether that be the cleaning staff to management. My rule of thumb is would I let the home care for my children, and the answer is an unequivocal yes.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The well-qualified and nurturing manager has held registered manager status in this home for 12 years. An equally skilled deputy manager ably supports her. It is a testament to the guidance and skills of this management team that there has not been any change in staff for a considerable period of time. The managers lead a passionate and inspirational staff team that wants the best possible outcomes for children and young people. The manager said, 'We invest in the staff as individuals as well as the home. We are a family here and we ensure that the staff develop and grow through nurturing, the same way the children do.'

The two recommendations raised at the last inspection have been fully met. This demonstrates the home's capacity to improve, while improving the standard of recording in the home. There were no breaches of regulation identified at this inspection.

The manager's aspiration for children and young people, and high expectations of staff,

ensure that an outstanding standard of care is provided. Progress is recorded clearly on 'WOW' sheets and in specific progress files, ensuring that any achievement is both recorded and recognised. This inspires the staff team to empower children and young people, while also ensuring that they enjoy their time in the home.

Enthusiastic and passionate staff report how well supported and trained they are. The exceptional commitment the local authority and manager have to ensuring that staff are fully trained to meet all needs is evident, for example closing the home for a week so that all the staff can receive up-to-date training together on a range of subjects. These included further communication skills and how to work with pathological demand avoidance. This investment in the staff team's knowledge ensures that children and young people receive the consistent, high-quality care that is allowing them to thrive. A staff member said, 'I love working here, it is a pleasure to come to work and the result is happy children. Training has been brilliant. I really enjoyed having the whole of last week to concentrate on training as a team.'

Effective auditing and reports prepared by both the independent visitor and the manager as part of her monitoring processes safeguard children and young people and promote their well-being. It is evident where the views of children and young people, staff and other interested parties have been used to inform practice, for example the development of the 'WOW' sheets and the improved communication profiles. Consequently, all feel that their voices are heard and that their contributions are valuable, further enhancing the collaborative working in the home.

The home's statement of purpose states, 'The adults in [home's name] actively promote and respect a young person's culture and heritage. The staff at [home's name] work as creatively as is possible to ensure that the racial, cultural, religious and linguistic needs of young people from ethnic minorities are catered for and regarded as paramount. The main emphasis is to ensure that young people receive the necessary care/opportunities to enable them to feel comfortable in their own cultural setting without experiencing the loneliness and isolation which are part and parcel of the feeling of "not quite belonging". This can only be achieved by ensuring that young people develop a sense of their own cultures.' The careful and consistent adherence to individual care plans, which actively promote each child and young person's unique and diverse needs, demonstrates that the home's ethos is being met.

The manager and staff have excellent working relationships with all partner agencies involved, not only in children and young people's care, but in their lives, including schools, health providers, soft play centres and the local mosque. This promotes children and young people's sense of belonging and acceptance within the local community, while ensuring that they receive consistent care. The manager said, 'We believe that every child is equal regardless of their disability. So whatever we do, whether its ice skating, going to the shows at the theatre, or theme parks, they have the same acceptance. We make sure we are fully inclusive. That's how we stretch our young people and how we get them to fulfil their potential.'

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC030967

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS24 8AY

Responsible individual: Danielle Swainston

Registered manager: Sylvia Lowe

Inspector

Ann-Marie Born, social care inspector

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