

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	19/02/2016
Unique reference number	SC030967
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Hartlepool Borough Council
Registered person address	Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland, TS24 8AY

Responsible individual	Sally Robinson
Registered manager	Sylvia Lowe
Inspector	Michele Hargan

Inspection date	19/02/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged Good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has Sustained Effectiveness. Independent visitor reports now demonstrate meaningful evaluation of the care young people receive, and also make clear that young people are safeguarded and that their welfare is promoted. This rigorous overview of the home helps identify good practice and promotes improvements in the best interest of young people. The registered manager has completed training to improve care practice and planning. This is aimed at producing review reports that capture young people's unique experiences and progress. While this shows a promising start in addressing a previous recommendation to ensure reviews are more child centred, this has as yet not been fully achieved. Young people's care plans are being overhauled and updated. Some examples of a more individualised approach is now evident, resulting in a more targeted help so young people achieve their developmental milestones. A senior member of staff said, 'We are aiming to have the new plans in place by the end of April.' Reports completed by the registered manager now evaluate the quality of care provided to young people. This means opportunities for further development are identified and actioned; demonstrating a drive to continually improve young people's experiences and help them to progress. The effect and any consequence of any measure to manage young people's behaviour is now reflected within the records maintained for this purpose. This means that action is taken to identify any triggers that may increase young people's anxieties. A senior member of staff said, 'Coming in from the garden was a trigger for (Name), so we swapped things around, he did his school work first and then played out for as long as he wanted.' These developments meet the two requirements and two of the three recommendations raised during the last inspection. Records of sanctions occasionally used by staff are incomplete. For example, what if any action staff took to try and avoid escalation of any behaviour; and the details of what actually happened are unclear. These omissions cause difficulties in	

identifying any themes that may underlay young people's behaviour. It is also unclear what if any restorative approaches staff use. This means that some young people do not receive the necessary support to help them make links between their feelings, thoughts and the impact of their behaviours.

Conversely, recognising and promoting young people's positive behaviour is a strength. A range of rewards are given to young people for their individual achievements, such as finding alternative ways of expressing difficult feelings. A social worker said, 'The home has a points reward scheme, young people get extra trips, activities, or tickets to concerts.'

Young people are safe and their behaviour shows that they feel safe. Young people do not go missing from the home. High levels of structure and supervision ensure young people's safety and wellbeing when they are out in the community. There are no complaints regarding any aspect of the home. A social worker said, 'Staff take young people all over the place, they go to parks, walking and they had a night out at in Indian restaurant to help a young person celebrate Eid, they really enjoyed that.'

While there are no concerns about any newly appointed staff, the outcome of reference checks are unclear; and this aspect of recruitment is not carried out by the registered manager. This raises uncertainty about what information has been checked and is a missed opportunity to gain further information about a candidate's suitability. In all other aspects recruitment practices are robust. For example, three references rather than two were in evidence for one person. This approach promotes the safety and wellbeing of young people.

Parents, professionals and young people speak highly of the registered manager and staff who demonstrate they are very effective at working with others. This means young people make good progress in all areas, including those who are admitted to the home at short notice. As staff are skilled at helping young people manage difficult feelings their social skills improve, building trust and learning to manage new experiences and challenges. A parent said, '(Name) has improved because they take him places, he's started to expect the unexpected. We went for a pub meal, we would never have done that. They give him more confidence to try.'

Young people receive effective help from staff preparing them for a planned move of placement and starting school. As a result of good communication and partnership working, young people learn that staff can help them manage their anxious feelings. This means young people get off to the best start possible within these new settings. A social worker said, 'They took (Name) for an assessment to a new school, staff stayed with him and by day three he was settled.'

The registered manager promotes a culture of ongoing learning. For example, the majority of staff have completed training improving their abilities to communicate with young people. In addition, a member of staff is responsible for taking a lead

in promoting increased understanding by young people of their surroundings. As a result, staff have a sound awareness that effective communication is a central part of care practice. A member of staff said, 'Each young person has their own communication pack, signs and symbols that they use. We are also helping young people learn a new sign each month, the word this month is juice.'

The home's cook takes a real pride in providing meals for young people and staff that are healthy, nutritious and appetising, promoting their physical wellbeing and enjoyment. Mealtimes clearly provide a relaxing break in young people's day, promoting their social and independent living skills.

Ongoing investment in the home is good, benefiting young people. The home has a new minibus; and has taken delivery of specialist equipment aimed at creating a dedicated sensory room as a result of investment by the registered provider. Ensuring this level of provision promotes young people's development, it access to transport affords them the same choices and opportunities as their peers. A parent said, '(Name) gets to do stuff that I couldn't do. They are constantly asking him what he wants to do.'

Information about this children's home

The home may only provide care and accommodation for up to eight children with learning disabilities (LD). The home must reduce the number of children by the number of people aged 18 and over for which it also provides care and accommodation. The home is owned and operated by a local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/09/2015	Full	Good
06/03/2015	Interim	Sustained Effectiveness
27/11/2014	Full	Good
25/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress

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
The Registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to a child within the home, a record is made which includes details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods or steps taken to avoid the use of the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user") and of any other person present when the measure was used; (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(ii)(iv)(v)(vi))	19/03/2016

Recommendations

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

- The registered person and the home's staff should be familiar with the care planning process for looked-after children and must assist children to prepare for meetings in relation to this. Staff should play an important role in these meetings, including supporting the child and enabling a clear understanding to be reached about the child's views, wishes, feelings, and expectations for their future. An independent advocate can also be called upon by the child or staff to support the child in their reviews. In particular, prepare a report primarily for the benefit of the child to be shared within looked after reviews. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 23 paragraph 4.14)
- The registered person should ensure any sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. In some cases it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to anyone hurt by their behaviour and the staff in the home should be skilled to support the child to understand this and carry it out. (The guide to the Quality Standards page 48 paragraph 9.38)

- The registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. In particular clearly record in writing the outcome of reference verification. (The Guide to the Quality Standards page 61, paragraph 13.1)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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