

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	24/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC030967
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Hartlepool Borough Council
Registered provider address	Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS24 8AY

Responsible Individual	Sally Robinson
Registered manager	Sylvia Lowe
Inspector	Michele Hargan

Inspection date	24/08/2016
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	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC030967

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Children and young people receive highly individualised care that helps to maximise their progress.
- The range of in-house and community activities that children and young people take part in are exceptional.
- Admission procedures for children and young people are excellent.
- Young people moving on from the home are exceedingly well prepared and benefit from exemplary key-worker support.
- Staff use a research-based approach to manage difficult behaviour, significantly decreasing children's and young people's anxieties.
- Meticulous placement plans and child-centred review documents mean that staff focus on how to help children and young people progress in all areas.
- Staff commitment is evident in the additional fundraising activities that they take part in, contributing to the provision of a new sensory room.
- Children, young people, parents and carers benefit from inspirational leadership and management.
- Senior staff are genuinely invested in continuing professional development, and share the outcome of training with staff to improve and promote good practice.

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

Recommendations

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

- The registered person is responsible for ensuring that each child's day-to-day health and well-being needs are met. Staff should work to make the children's home an environment that supports children's physical, mental and emotional health, in line with the approach set out in the home's statement of purpose.

In particular, make clear what the home does in practice to meet the needs and consult with children and young people who have communication difficulties.
(‘Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 33, paragraph 7.3)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides short breaks for up to eight children with learning disabilities. If the home accommodates a young person aged 18 then it must reduce the number of children accommodated by one. It is operated by a local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/09/2015	Full	Good
06/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
27/11/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Staff methodically plan children's and young people's care, significantly aiding their overall development. Individually abilities are assessed using a child-friendly format. This results in a celebration of children's and young people's talents and achievements, alongside identifying areas that would benefit from further support. A member of staff said, 'I have recently spoken to a young person's parents. They were really proud of what he had achieved. They can take their certificates to school, and another young person has certificates to say what cooking and baking she has done. She loves that, because it helps her to understand what she can do.' Staff are highly skilled in building effective relationships with children and young people. They demonstrate this through sensitive responses, conveying to the child or young person that they are genuinely interested in them. As staff understand the crucial link between play and learning, they provide opportunities to take part in bespoke activities aimed at meeting the individual developmental needs of children and young people. For example, trips to places of interest for walking, as part of a physical rehabilitation, and constructive experiences of outdoor play. This results in significantly improved physical and emotional well-being. A member of staff said, 'The young person loves sensory play with water, in the "mud kitchen". She just has the best time. It helps her to stay calm and she is less agitated.' Children and young people's short stays fruitfully enrich their lives, exceeding parents' and professionals' expectations. A vibrant and highly aspirational culture, alongside high levels of structure and supervision, means that children and young people can fully participate in what the home has to offer. Children and young people really look forward to their stays, because they feel meaningfully engaged and enjoy themselves while making real progress. This results in improved patterns of sleep, reduced anxieties around mealtimes and better communication. A parent said, 'He has made fabulous progress. He can form sentences that are more readily understood by others and it shows, out in the community, eating out, going to the shop – simple things, being able to speak to someone. It's a small thing, but being understood is huge.' Staff support children and young people to succeed in the activities and pastimes that they are encouraged to take part in. Staff are vigilant in noticing and rewarding positive behaviour through a points-based system that leads to rewards that have a special value for individual children and young people. A parent said, 'They took him to wheelchair ice-skating and to a show. He loves musicals.' An innovative approach to the admission process helps children who are new to the	

home to quickly settle in and make excellent progress in their communication and social skills. This involves parents and professionals taking part in a 'child appreciation meeting', to build a holistic picture of the child's abilities and needs. This enables an in-depth understanding of a child before admission so that staff are extremely well prepared. A parent commented, 'I feel like they know our child now.' A social worker said, 'I picked up on information about the child that I didn't know. It was very helpful and the child's family quite enjoyed it.' Another parent said, 'The transition was handled brilliantly. We met with the key worker and we discussed our son. She went to visit him in school, where he was more comfortable.'

Similarly, young people moving on from the home also receive exemplary key-work support and excellent individualised help well in advance of their planned move. This helps reduce young people feeling anxious and overwhelmed, and instead are well prepared and experience a very positive transition. As a part of this process, young people are presented with a bound pictorial record capturing their significant moments and achievements for them to treasure. A member of staff said, 'We threw a surprise party for the young person. Off-duty staff came in. We had a collection and staff bought him a gift – an electronic game that he'd always wanted. He couldn't believe it.' A social worker said, 'The home was a massive support.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
Children and young people are safe during their short breaks. They do not go missing and they are not bullied or exploited. Without exception, parents, carers, professionals and staff agree that this is the case. Staff are clear about what to do in the event of any issues and they are highly vigilant for any possible indicators of concern. A parent said, 'We have never had any concerns about his safety. We know that he is safe.' The managers are accredited trainers in a psychotherapeutic approach using an attachment model. They actively share their knowledge with the staff team. This has resulted in skilled responses to children and young people who communicate difficulties through their behaviour. This has helped children and young people to make links between their feelings, thoughts and behaviours. This approach helps children and young people recognise they have choices about how to behave. As a result of this development sanctions are no longer used and restrictive physical interventions have significantly reduced. This response exceeds a previous recommendation. A member of staff said, 'It does work. Our restraint log has gone down massively. You can see it more from their point of view. The children are happier and it's so much better.' A parent also said, 'The way that they talk to him, they try to distract him and they show real respect for him. He just calms right	

down.’ The details of these low-level interventions are now fully recorded. This makes staff accountable for their actions and meets a previous requirement.

Significantly improved staff recruitment procedures ensure the management verify references directly. This maximises the opportunity to clarify any issues and obtain further information. This additional safeguard further protects children and young people by ensuring that prospective staff are carefully vetted. This also meets a previous recommendation.

Children and young people experience a short break in a home that is safe, comfortable and exceedingly well equipped to meet their needs. Active fundraising by staff and a donation from the local authority staff lottery have led to the provision of a well-equipped sensory room. Further communication aids throughout the home have significantly improved children’s and young people’s abilities to express their wants and needs. In addition, the provision of an inflatable hot tub in the home’s garden area means that young people have access to sensory experiences that meet their development needs and help them to relax. A member of staff said, ‘We have the special wetsuits for children and they are properly supervised, and we make sure that the water is clean and safe.’

A proactive management culture means that staff routinely undertake environmental safety checks throughout the building. This approach ensures that any health and safety matters are quickly identified and actioned. This typifies the preventative approach to safeguarding children and young people that is a strong feature of the home. A senior member of staff said, ‘We have updated all the risk assessments. They are now red, amber or green, so you can see at a glance any areas of concern. We have all risk assessments signed up to by parents and social workers and we have incorporated PACE (playful, accepting, curious and empathic response) into all the behaviour support plans.’

Any complaints or concerns are taken seriously and investigated, and the outcome fed back to the complainant to resolve any issues. This response helps to sustain meaningful relationships with stakeholders, in the best interests of children and young people.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The highly dedicated manager is suitably qualified and experienced, and has been in post since 2008. The manager is clearly committed to continuing professional development and is an inspiring role model for staff. This is also evident in the care and time taken to ensure that staff receive high-quality training tied to improving outcomes for children and young people. When discussing the home’s ethos, the manager said, ‘We use an approach aimed at helping children and young people to	

develop their personal and social skills. It means that each child or young person has a chance to shine in an area that is focused on them, and that helps to develop and stretch them. It helps them to realise their potential.'

A record of achievements now forms the basis for representing the views and accomplishments of children and young people. The pictorial document portrays the impact on children's and young people's development, so that any improvement and areas where additional help can be targeted are apparent. This assessment process is underpinned by a methodical approach to promoting children's and young people's holistic development which maximises their potential. This development exceeds a previous recommendation.

Highly skilled staff inspire confidence in parents, carers and professionals, because children and young people receive excellent care. Staff know how to earn the trust of children and young people, and this lays the foundation for sound relationships. The tailored care that children and young people receive reflects their unique personalities and interests. This helps them to feel genuinely invested, maximising their overall progress. A very good response to Ofsted surveys also adds to this view. For example, a parent wrote, 'It is the most fantastic place with brilliant staff, and we are so glad that our child has the opportunity to go there.' A social worker stated, 'Staff are always eager to discuss how they feel they could further promote the child's well-being. Staff go above and beyond what is expected of them.'

Reports completed by the independent visitor are rigorous, and make a meaningful contribution to reviewing the quality of care that children and young people receive. This promotes accountability by staff and managers for their actions and helps to ensure that the home maintains high standards.

Reviews of the quality of care provided by the home are worthwhile. This process focuses on what can be done to further improve the support that children and young people receive. It is evident that the identified actions translate into excellent care practice that is immensely beneficial to children and young people.

Meaningful consultation about the home is undertaken with children, young people, parents, carers and professionals. The results demonstrate a united view by all concerned that staff provide an outstanding service. This is underpinned by ongoing development of staff which is firmly established. For five days in every year, staff receive intensive training, helping them to achieve a shared understanding about any new approaches or learning. Staff clearly feel valued and sustained by this initiative. The additional benefit of the event is to strengthen cohesive teamwork. As a result, children and young people receive a consistent approach from all staff, with the new ways of working helping to reduce any anxious or distressed feelings.

The home's statement of purpose does not fully reflect what happens in practice to ensure effective communication with children and young people. This omission

means that any new stakeholders, parents and carers are not fully informed about what staff do to ensure that children's and young people's views, wishes and feelings are taken into account.

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 children looked after 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 that 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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