

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	24/09/2015
Unique reference number	SC030967
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Hartlepool Borough Council
Registered person address	Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland, TS24 8AY

Responsible individual	Mrs Sally Robinson
Registered manager	Miss Sylvia Lowe
Inspector	Ms Michele Hargan

Inspection date	24/09/2015
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	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	Good

SC030967

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Consultation with children, young people, parents and staff is well organised and purposeful leading to better outcomes.
- Children and young people consistently take part in a very wide range of varied activities and experiences that enrich their lives.
- Staff work flexibly to support individual young people by responding to requests at a moment's notice when additional staff are needed.
- Staff take part in creative activities using reflective practice to further increase understanding about children experiences.
- Children and young people play a significant and valuable part in staff appraisal and recruitment.
- A child appreciation day forms part of the admission process.
- The Registered Manager promotes a culture of continual improvement.

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 – (a) within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child within the home, a record is made which includes – (vii) the effectiveness and any consequence of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(a)(vii))	31/10/2015

The independent person must produce a report about a visit (“the independent person’s report”) which sets out, in particular, the independent person’s opinion as to whether – (a) children are effectively safeguarded; and (b) the conduct of the home promotes children’s well-being. (Regulation 44(4))	31/10/2015
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Recommendations

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

- Ensure the home’s staff are 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. 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)
- Ensure the registered person has a system in place that allows them to monitor the matters set out in Regulation. Review the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. In particular, to make clear within the report the impact that care has for children and young people. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 64 paragraph 15.2)
- Ensure that any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home’s arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home’s care. In particular, that reports evaluate every aspect of the care provided to children and young people rather than just provide a description. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 65 paragraph 15.5)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to eight children with learning disabilities (LD). The home is operated by a local authority. The home may also accommodate young adults which reduces the number of children for which it also provides care and accommodation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/03/2015	Interim	Sustained Effectiveness
27/11/2014	Full	Good
25/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress
14/08/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Children experience care and support enabling them to take part in ordinary everyday activities. This includes things like going to the shop to choose a magazine and more tailored support through key-work sessions such as planning a big birthday celebration. These experiences help meet children and young people's social and emotional developmental needs. A member of staff said, 'I helped a young person plan his birthday, he said it was hard work but he was glad he did it.' About his birthday celebrations a young person said, 'I went to Pizza Hut with my girlfriend, for a meal with my family, paintballing and for a meal with staff.' Staff undertake training that directly benefits the children and young people. For example, training in play therapy for children with autism and acquiring sign language skills. As a result, children and young people's needs are more readily understood. Ensuring staff develop effective communication skills to increase their understanding empowers children and young people and respects their rights. For example, a senior member of staff said, 'Staff are all doing Makaton training.' Staff recognise when it is in the best interest of children and young people to enlist	

the services of an advocate. This means staff work effectively with others to secure the services of appropriate professionals who uphold children and young people's rights.

Children and young people who stay and live at the home have a worthwhile experience. This is because the vast majority of parents, carers and staff have a shared understanding about what children and young people need and they agree about how best to meet them. In an Ofsted survey a child said, 'I love going there and doing lots of new things, and getting out in the community. Also, about the care her child receives, a parent said, 'He looks immaculate and his clothes smell nice and you can tell that he is genuinely loved.'

The registered provider is a powerful advocate for young people who are unable to use words to identify sources of pain and distress. This leads to the appropriate involvement of health professionals to address the underlying medical needs of young people, improving their physical wellbeing. This approach reassures children, young people, their parents and professionals that staff persevere until any concerns are resolved.

Effective systems are in place to safely administer, dispense and store children and young people's medication. This includes daily checks of medications by night staff resulting in the occasional human error being identified and swiftly addressed. A parent said about her experience of medication procedures, 'I have to sign it in, the staff sign it in, it goes in a locked cupboard, I have to sign it out when I take it home, the system works.'

Staff enable children and young people's participation in festivals reflective of their religious background. This raises children and young people's understanding of their cultural heritage and helps shape their sense of identity. A member of staff said, 'We did some work with children and young people all about Eid. The young person wore a sari and we went to a restaurant that served traditional food.'

Children and young people's care and routines are consistent with those at home. This means going to school is a central part of their day, helping them make the most of their education. Communication between the home, schools and with parents is effective. This promotes consistency and means that any concerns are proactively addressed helping reduce children and young people's anxieties at times of transition. A parent said, 'I get a detailed report I know how he has been, it's helpful to have this.' A headteacher said, 'I am very happy with the communication and the relationship that we have, it's a two-way thing.'

Children and young people make good progress, taking into account their starting point. This means that they are more relaxed and can take part in important social activities. For example, sitting together at the table, getting along with peers and taking part in community activities. A parent said, 'He is learning how to share. Because there are other children he has to wait and take turns. I think that's good

for him.'

Children and young people's behaviour and emotional wellbeing improve. This is because staff are clear and consistent with children and young people about boundaries and expectations. About a young person a social worker said, 'His behaviour is much more appropriate and he is showing much more compassion to other young people.'

Children and young people's admissions to the home are well planned and all relevant information is gathered from a range of sources so a thorough assessment is completed. This approach increases the likelihood of a successful transition and builds trust with parents and carers. In addition, the impact of this for existing children and young people is considered. This means any issues or concerns are known and addressed. A senior member of staff said, 'We have a child appreciation day as part of the admission process so we get a good understanding of the child's needs.'

Children and young people receive effective support when necessary to spend time with their families. This means staff are clear that such arrangements are primarily for the benefit of children and young people. As a result, any concerns in relation to this are swiftly identified and brought to the attention of the child's social worker.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Staff work with young people to raise their awareness about how to stay safe when using the internet. This deepens children and young people's understanding about the potential risks that they can be exposed to. A senior member of staff said, 'A member of staff did a session exploring the reasons why a young person wanted to use Facebook, this really made the young person think.' This approach builds young people's reflective capacity. The effectiveness and any consequence of any physical intervention by staff in response to children and young people's behaviour are not appropriately considered. The impact of this is minimal at present. This is because additional safeguards are in place to address the underlying reasons regarding the one young person who is currently requiring this type of support. Nonetheless, this omission undermines systems designed to demonstrate that children and young people are only restrained when absolutely necessary.	

Staff occasionally use sanctions as a means of managing young people's behaviour. The effectiveness and any consequence of sanctions are not recorded. This means any patterns or themes which may underlies the child or young person's behaviour are not identified or addressed.

The majority of children and young people's behaviour does not require staff intervention of any sort. This is because most children and young people understand and respond to the boundaries and reinforcement of positive behaviour that staff employ. For example, children and young people are able to earn points for positive behaviour. This approach is routinely employed resulting in children and young people being rewarded with treats and opportunities to take part in further activities. This increases children and young people's understanding about making positive choices. A senior member of staff said, 'All children and young people earn their points for positive behaviour.'

Children and young people make a significant contribution to staff appraisal and recruitment. This means their views are gathered by the registered person about existing staff contributing to reviews of their performance. They also play an important part in interviewing prospective staff by asking them questions which they have compiled. About the recruitment process a senior member of staff said, 'One young person was really pleased because the person he thought we should choose was the person we appointed.'

Children, young people and their parents or carer receive support tailored to their needs, this starts with the admission process. This means when a child or young person is introduced to the home there is time to establish trust and mutual understanding. This builds the confidence of parents and carers about the skills and abilities of staff caring for their children helping allay any fears or anxieties. About this approach, a parent said, 'I had a member of staff coming to stay with me before we came back, they wanted to make sure he had some positive contact, it worked well.'

Staff work with children and young people to help them understand how to stay safe online. This increases young people's understanding about the possible dangers they can be exposed to. About using Facebook, a member of staff said, 'I asked the young person, "how do you know they are your friends?" he was really surprised by the idea that someone might not be.' Some young people take part in activities about things like bullying and learn it is okay to ask questions about behaviour and relationships. This approach helps young people reflect on their relationships with their peers. A member of staff explained the impact of this for one young person, 'He said what do you mean it's more important to be kind than to be right?'

Staff compile thorough risk assessments about children and young people's needs. These included clear actions about what to do to reduce the likelihood of any occurrence and the information is regularly reviewed. Ensuring risk assessments

remain relevant and up to date promotes the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. A parent said, 'They have risk assessed him, but it doesn't stop him from doing anything.'

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
Registered Manager's reports, while very detailed, do not sufficiently demonstrate the impact that the quality of care has on outcomes and improvements for children and young people. This omission undermines systems aimed at demonstrating accountability and decreases opportunities to identify further improvements. Independent visitor reports do not make clear whether children and young people are effectively safeguarded and whether their wellbeing is promoted. Nor are reports sufficiently evaluative about the quality of care children and young people receive. As a result of this the experiences of children and young people are not meaningfully represented. This also means these reports do not usefully inform the registered provider's reviews of the quality of care. Conversely children, young people, their parents, carers and staff take part in exceptionally meaningful consultation organised by the registered provider. The result of this is an action plan aimed at improving the quality of the service. Staff also take part in creative exercises aimed at maintaining an empathic approach towards caring for children and young people. For example, using reflective practice to write how a child may feel about the home and how they would experience the staff. A senior member of staff said, 'Some staff were really moved by this. It made them think about how you can repeatedly ask children to do things and what that's like for them.' The Registered Manager is a suitably skilled and experienced individual who holds various qualifications relevant to the post. In addition, this person is undertaking the necessary Level 5 training aimed at meeting the currently required qualification by the end of the year. The Registered Manager is also committed to ongoing professional development and expressed an intention to undertake additional study relating to Autism. Ensuring the person in overall charge maintains up to date knowledge promotes a culture of learning benefitting children, young people and staff. Overall, staff relationships with parents are good. Staff respect their views and understand the difficulties that parents can sometimes face in meeting their children's needs. This approach establishes a culture of openness so parents are	

relaxed in talking to staff about any matter because they are confident this will be responded to appropriately. About the staff a parent said, 'It's not just a job here.' Also, 'There's an open door policy here, everyone is approachable.'

Children and young people's records are well maintained and ordered. This means that the home's placement plans about how to care for children and young people are based on relevant and full information about their backgrounds and needs. About assessing a child or young person a senior member of staff said, 'We have a child appreciation day so that we get as much information as possible and we build up an accurate picture of the child.'

Staff provide photographs of children and young people taking part in activities and events for looked after reviews. They also attend this meeting and provide a verbal report. They do not however contribute a written report as part of this process. This is a missed opportunity to aid children, young people and others current and future understanding about their experiences during their stays at the home.

All staff are trained in safe methods of physical intervention and about what to do to avoid this if at all possible. This means that physical intervention is only carried when necessary and that this is safely used. A member of staff is now a trainer and able to assist with any queries or practice issues as they arise. A member of staff said, 'It's much better because staff are trained more quickly.'

The registered person is aware of what to do in the event of a safeguarding concern should this arise, including notifying Ofsted. No such notifications have been required since the last inspection. Effective action is taken to share any information potentially affecting children and young people's safety with social workers and those who need to know.

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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