

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	28/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC030967
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Hartlepool Borough Council
Registered provider address	Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool, Teesside TS24 8AY
Responsible Individual	Sally Robinson
Registered manager	Sylvia Lowe
Inspector	Michele Hargan

Inspection date	28/02/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Outstanding
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 outstanding at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has improved effectiveness. A previous recommendation is now met and two recommendations are made as a result of this inspection. The statement of purpose makes clear the range of ways in which staff routinely consult children and young people who have communication difficulties. This means that stakeholders, including parents, are clear about how staff respect the rights of children and young people to influence the care that they receive. This development meets a previous recommendation. Staff provide children and young people with a range of excellent activities. This is because there is a strong focus on maximising children's and young people's potential. A structured programme promotes and celebrates their achievements, such as increased levels of self-care and independence. Organised events also take place that reflect children's and young people's individual interests. This makes their short breaks genuinely enjoyable and memorable. A parent said, 'It's not a one-size-fits-all approach. It's great that they try to do things that are just for [Name]. Every member of staff is totally approachable. Everything that we ever needed they have provided.' Professionals have a high regard for managers and staff because they provide a sound service to children, young people and their parents and carers. A proactive approach is taken to keeping social workers and other professionals well informed about any relevant matters. This makes a worthwhile contribution to care planning and results in a service that is clearly child centred and focused on improvement. A social worker said, '[Name] has come on in leaps and bounds since coming here.' Parents share this confidence because they know that staff also want what is best for every child and young person. This individualised approach helps to build trust. For example, children and young people experience a warm and nurturing atmosphere where the focus is on making their short breaks worthwhile and enjoyable. Describing what is best about the home, a parent said, 'The way they are sensitive to my child's needs – I think it is the understanding that they have of him and, if they have any situations, they can manage his behaviour well.' Excellent partnership working with health professionals improves the skills of staff and their understanding of children's and young people's needs. Staff receive	

training in medical procedures so that they are competent to deliver an increased level of care and support. As a result, children and young people are safely and quickly able to resume their short stays, aiding their social and emotional development. A nurse said, 'They are clear that they have to follow the healthcare plan for [Name]. Everything is going really well. They know that they can come to us at any time. They've done really well taking all the training on board.'

Protecting children and young people at risk of harm due to external factors is a key strength of the home. Staff recognise concerns and they take decisive protective action, for example updating social workers, enabling them to review contact arrangements. This improves children's and young people's safety and well-being. A social worker said, 'They do whatever we need. Their contribution is crucial in safeguarding young people.' Another said, 'They are the type of staff that would not just sit back. They are very proactive.'

A generous system of rewards reinforces children's and young people's positive behaviour. Staff do not employ sanctions as they realise that this approach is ineffective. Instead, they seize on opportunities to recognise when children and young people make constructive choices, helping to improve their social skills. A parent said, 'They do lots to help [Name]'s independence skills. He loves to bake. He has done it here before. They would help him with that.'

Staff ensure that the facilities in the home are of a high standard. They understand the essential nature of play and provide children and young people with the necessary equipment and practical support. Ongoing fundraising by staff contributes to this through the provision of bespoke play equipment. This significantly aids children's and young people's emotional and social development. A member of staff said, 'We are having some "mud kitchens" for sensory play made that children can use in the garden.'

Staff occasionally have to restrain a child or young person to keep them safe. While there is no concern about how these restraints are carried out, the use of jargon in the records means that the details leading to this action are open to inappropriate interpretation. This hampers effective review aimed at identifying any triggers or underlying difficulties.

Staff receive effective support from the management team, enabling them to work well and focus on the needs of children and young people. This sustains their motivation to improve the support that they provide to children and young people. They also benefit from ongoing training and reflective practice. A member of staff said, 'The group supervisions are good, and I think we get a lot out of them. We do these after the team meetings and we can talk about what works for individual children and young people.'

Reviews of the quality of care that the home provides demonstrate that the home makes a major difference to improving the lives of children and young people. However, these reports do not make clear what further action is planned to sustain ongoing improvement. This omission reduces accountability by those responsible for ensuring forward planning.

Information about this children's home

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

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/08/2016	Full	Outstanding
19/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/09/2015	Full	Good
06/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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 recommendations:

- Records of restraint must be kept and should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

In particular, avoid the use of any jargon in records to describe children's and young people's behaviour.

- The registered person is responsible for deciding what each review should focus on, based on the specific circumstances of the home at that particular time and any areas of high risk to the children that the home is designed to care for, such as missing or exploitation. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next six months of delivery in the home and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 65 paragraph 15.4)

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 that 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 whom 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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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