

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC031479
Inspector	Seka Graovac
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	London Borough of Southwark
Registered person address	London Borough of Southwark, Play Service 285 Albany Road London London SE5 0AH
Responsible individual	Kevin McCall
Registered manager	Michael David Garrity
Date of last inspection	12/03/2014

Inspection date	27/10/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The home is effective at providing personalised care and support that fully meet the complex and diverse needs of children and young people who use this short break service. A consistent, highly experienced and caring staff team makes a strong contribution to the progress that children and young people make and to the outcomes that they achieve.

The service provides children and young people with great opportunities to have new and enjoyable experiences. Staff empower them to make positive choices and to continue to learn while having fun. The good safeguarding practice ensures the protection and promotion of safety and welfare of children and young people at all times.

A recently registered, visionary, ambitious, energetic and highly capable manager is confidently moving the service forward to modernise it and to achieve continuous improvement. Based on rigorous monitoring activities, leaders and managers are effective at identifying any opportunities for improvement and implementing comprehensive plans to ensure that the improvement is consistently achieved.

The requirements included in this report relate to providing Ofsted with copies of some documents and ensuring that the permanent staff appointments are subject to

a satisfactory period of probation. No negative impact of these breaches on children and young people have been observed. The recommendations included in this report relate to enhancing the robustness of the staff vetting procedure by consistently making telephone enquiries, increasing the frequency of staff supervision meetings and bringing more consistency to the paperwork relating to the care planning.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority service. It provides short breaks for up to five children who have learning and/or physical disabilities. The breaks are provided Monday to Friday or at weekends.

The children's respite service shares the building with a similar service for adults. The services are kept separate by locked doors, but the garden is shared. One manager is registered for both children's and adults' services. Staff also work across both provisions. The adult service is inspected separately by the Care Quality Commission.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/03/2014	Interim	good progress
31/07/2013	Full	good
28/02/2013	Interim	good progress
25/10/2012	Full	adequate

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
5 (2001)	notify Ofsted of any revision of the statement of purpose and the children's guide within 28 days (Regulation 5 (b))	31/12/2014
27 (2001)	ensure that all permanent staff appointments are subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation (Regulation 27 (1)(a))	28/01/2015

34 (2001)	provide Ofsted with the report on the review of care that is written in line with the regulation, every three months. (Regulation 34)	31/12/2014
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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 that telephone enquiries as well as obtaining written references are part of the staff vetting procedure (NMS 16.1)
- provide more regular staff supervision (NMS 19.4)
- ensure the system for reviewing the short-break care plans is improved so that all parts of this process are consistently updated. (NMS 25.3)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Children and young people access a wide range of stimulating activities in the company of their peers and caring staff members. Their participation, positive involvement and integration with the community are good. They have good opportunities to try and experience new things and to learn from them.

Staff communicate effectively with all children and young people regardless of the levels of their understanding and communication difficulties. They enable children and young people to understand the options they have, to express themselves and to know that their views, feelings and choices count. Staff sensitively guide children and young people to make safe choices and to experience positive consequences that come with those choices.

A staff member shared with the inspector an example of the significant progress that the young person has made in relation to their understanding and management of time. This has had a very positive impact on their school attendance, punctuality and engagement with education. They can now get ready for the school in a half an hour instead of three hours that previously took.

Staff members also gave a number of examples to the inspector that related to the increased ability of children and young people to take care of their personal hygiene themselves. This means that they have achieved increased levels of independence.

Their social awareness and social skills have developed further. They have become more confident about themselves and more confident to try new things. They are more able to engage positively with adults and peers around them. They have formed positive relationships with the staff members. This is a particularly significant achievement for children and young people with autistic spectrum disorder.

The inspector observed children and young people being happy and relating in a trusting manner to the members of staff. A mother shared her observations of her son always being happy to come to the home and to leave her at the doorstep. A manager of the disability team commented positively about the positive impact of the service on the lives of the families in the borough.

The independence of children and young people is maximised effectively. They are well prepared for the transition to adult services. It is particularly helpful that some young people continue to use the same service for adults, once they reach 18 years of age. This effectively promotes the consistency of support that they receive from childhood into adulthood and makes this transition smooth and easy.

Quality of care**good**

Staff are consistently concerned about the welfare and development of the children and young people in their care. They are effective at involving children and young people in the life of the home and in the life of the local community. They are skilled at forming positive relationships with children and young people regardless of the level of the difficulty, challenge and disability the children and young people present with.

The management and staff work in close partnership with parents to ensure that the children and young people experience the consistency of care and of the routines that they are used to.

Children and young people are sensitively and gradually introduced to the service. This enables them to start using the service with ease. It also ensures that staff members develop good understanding of the needs of each child or young person before they stay overnight in the home.

Staff ensure that the short break care plans are tailored to the individual needs of the children and young people. They ensure that those needs, including any equality and diversity issues are fully addressed in the daily living. The service is organised in the way that fully takes into account the group dynamics and the complex needs of every child or young person involved.

The management and staff also work in effective collaboration with other professionals who are involved in the life of the child or young person to ensure the continuity of the approach across different partner-agencies. Staff members attend the local authority's Team Around the Child meetings and any other significant meetings, such as family conferences and child protection meetings. They contribute to the local children social care team having a more accurate and wider picture of the child and their family and of the support that they need in order to maintain a positive and safe family life.

Staff members proactively and appropriately share their observations and any concerns with parents and professionals. An example of this is when they identified that the young person stopped progressing in the development of their life skills. Their concerns that the young person might have an additional need that caused the stagnation and regress led to a specialist medical assessment, a diagnosis and targeted treatment. As the barrier to the young person's further progress has been addressed and minimised, they have started achieving better outcomes. Supporting children and young people with their medical needs and the robust management of medication are the particular strengths of the service.

Keeping children and young people safe**good**

Regular health and safety checks and annual reviews of the risks assessments of the specially adapted environment ensure that it remains safe and suitable for children and young people with disabilities and other complex needs. Control measures are consistently in place to minimise any risks to children, young people, staff and visitors.

Staff members receive regular training in safeguarding children. They have a good understanding of what constitutes good safeguarding and are able to implement it in practice. They know the children and young people in their care very well and are highly observant of any changes to their usual behaviour and moods. Staff are effective at interpreting these changes and recognising any heightened risks and concerns. They are proactive at appropriately sharing this information on a 'need to know' basis. An example of this is how the home worked in close partnership with the children's services regarding changes in medication that a parent had implemented without consulting a medical professional.

Other training that staff receive also contributes to good practice in respect of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. The team's expertise in managing challenging behaviour has been recently strengthened by the two staff members becoming trainers on this subject.

Staff use physical interventions as the last resort. A log of staff physical interventions clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach to promoting positive relationships and behaviours. Previously, a young person required staff physical intervention each time they had a short-break. Since May 2014, they have been able to manage their behaviour safely and have not needed any physical intervention.

The home favours an approach to behaviour management that proactively builds on the positive relationships and de-escalation. Staff vigilantly and sensitively respond to any signs of the rising tensions and deploy de-escalating measures swiftly and effectively to calm down the children and young people in those situations.

The home also has a proactive approach to the risk assessment process. Although some young people who use the service have a history of absconding, there have been no incidents of any child or a young person absconding or going missing while using this service. Good planning in terms of the staffing levels and the development of staff skills safeguard and protect children and young people effectively. The consistency of the staff team strongly promotes the development of trusting relationships between the staff members and the children and young people, which in turn, enhances the safeguarding further.

When new staff members are recruited on a permanent basis, the council follows clear procedures for ensuring that they are suitable to work with children and young people. However, the prospective staff's references are not followed up with telephone enquiries. The Registered Manager has telephone conversations with the referees of the agency staff who occasionally work in the home. Consistently

validating written references for all the staff who work in the home on which ever basis, is an area for recommended improvement.

Leadership and management

good

An enthusiastic and highly competent manager registered with Ofsted in July 2014. He has a wide range of work experience in schools and with other services for children and young people with complex needs. He has completed a NVQ 4 Diploma in Health and Social Care and is looking forward to extending his qualification to a higher level.

He is a visionary, energetic and effective leader. In addition to bringing much needed stability to the team, he has inspired staff members to wholeheartedly engage in an overhaul of the service and management of change. The leaders, managers and staff members have become more ambitious for children and young people and more ambitious about improving and developing the service. There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement on all levels of the staff and management structure. The home is becoming more flexible and more consistently up to date with the upcoming changes in legislation, and the developments in the field of care for children and young people with disabilities.

The comprehensive manager's review of the service is complemented by the monthly monitoring reports written by an independent visitor. Those reports have a particular focus on developing further the person-centred care. They are regularly sent to Ofsted.

The manager clearly demonstrates that robust monitoring and reviews take place on almost on-going basis and periodically, in a more formal way. However, Ofsted does not always receive these reports in the frequency prescribed by the relevant regulation. This undermines our monitoring function. Ofsted has also not received a copy of the home's revised Statement of Purpose. Another breach of legislation that was identified at the visit relates to the permanent staff appointments not being subject to a probationary period. These breaches of legislation have not had any negative impact on the children and young people who use the service.

Based on realistic self-appraisal and full audit, the leaders and managers have devised a comprehensive improvement and development plan. Their business case for significant additional resources is under the council's consideration. In addition to the short term improvement plan for the service, there is a clear long-term development plan that is underpinned by the council's significant financial investment and a strong commitment to providing excellent service to its community. The change is appropriately paced to bring everybody on board and it has been managed well.

Leaders and managers are committed to developing further the evidence-based practice that is enabled by more precise and more integrated and streamlined record-keeping. The manager has developed a number of new formats to more specifically support, capture, evidence and measure all the aspects of the quality of the service and the wide-ranging positive impact that the service has on the children and young people and their families.

A range of workshops has been set up in the home to focus on the further improvement of the documentation relating to the individual care plans and risk assessments. The management is also trying to involve other professionals to contribute to the planning and review of the care of children and young people who are not looked after, in a more systematic way. As children and young people usually use the service every six to eight weeks, staff review their needs with their parents at the beginning of each short break. The overall care plan is then updated with any changes. This has not consistently happened and the home is addressing this weakness and reviewing the whole process. The format for recording physical interventions has also been revised as recommended at the last inspection.

In support of developing the professionalism of the staff further, the council provides them with access to comprehensive training opportunities. Staff receive regular appraisals and reviews of their practice. They receive individual supervision, but this has not always happened in the frequency agreed between the staff and the management. The duty roster has been recently amended to allow for extra time that is specifically allocated for the meetings to take place and for working on the improvement of the records. The home's drive for continuous improvement is palpable and underpinned by appropriate resources.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.