

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	10/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC033120
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Luton Borough Council
Registered person address	Luton Borough Council Town Hall George Street Luton LU1 2BQ

Responsible individual	Joanne Fisher
Registered manager	Christine Ali
Inspector	Debbie Young

Inspection date	10/03/2017
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 judges that it has sustained effectiveness. The manager has met the two recommendations raised at the last inspection. The updated children's guide includes clear information advising children who to contact for advice and support. This guide includes photographs and symbols and telephone contact numbers. The visual images and text ensure accessibility for the children. A rewards and target system is in place. Key workers identify a specific task for the child to work towards. These small goals work well and the staff encourage the children to work towards their targets during their stay. One child really responds well to the stickers and reward certificates and, as a result, there are clear improvements in his behaviour. Children have positive experiences. The staff team provides nurturing care and knows the children's individual needs well. Parents' views are very positive about the level of care provided to the children. A parent said, 'My daughter has a really good time there [the home]. The staff are very co-operative and very helpful. Whenever we have needed them, they were there. The staff are really lovely.' Parents receive regular updates and they are aware of how their children are getting on during their stay. This puts parents' minds at ease and enables them to recharge their batteries and relax. They are confident that their children are well cared for. Children attend activities locally, such as going to the park, and they have enjoyed a recent trip to the circus. The staff visit parents at home, prior to new admissions being agreed, to complete a risk assessment and to gather information about the child. Introductory visits to the home support the children who are commencing short breaks to get to know the staff and the home. The manager ensures that careful planning takes place for each child. The children get to know the home at their own pace. Each transition meets the needs of the individual. This practice is very child focused and ensures that the children's needs are a priority. Currently, the staff are assessing a number of children who have complex health needs because a local hospice is no longer able to provide support. This will require specialised training for the staff team, with the provision of additional staff members to meet the needs of the children. The manager and the staff team work effectively with other professionals. This	

promotes the ethos of the team around the child. A professional said, 'The staff team is very capable and will seek me out if it needs further advice. This is very positive.' There are close links with social care and education. Good communication ensures good experiences for the children. An education professional said, 'They [the staff] liaise with us about transitional change and they also use the same communication tools with the children. It is a nice, welcoming and lovely place. It provides a good level of care.'

The staff rotas are planned carefully to meet the needs of the children. The senior management team assesses group dynamics, and space in the home is used creatively. There is close supervision of children, and good interactions between the staff and the children are evident. The staff enable the children to settle into the home after school by following their usual routines, such as having a snack or listening to a story book.

Comprehensive, detailed and up-to-date risk assessments inform the behaviour support plans for the children, which identify how to manage the children effectively, according to their needs. There is robust training for the staff in the use of physical intervention. However, no physical interventions have been used at the home and the use of distraction techniques is successful.

The staff team works well together and the new staff feel welcomed and supported. There is a clear induction programme for the new staff, which combines shift shadowing, buddying and a comprehensive training programme. This promotes the level of care in the home and ensures that all staff are well equipped for their roles.

Safer recruitment procedures are in place; however, one file did not clearly evidence a reference verification by telephone. This does not consistently show that all aspects of the process are recorded.

The staff feel well supported and say that their supervision is effective. A staff member said, 'The manager is really good and really approachable. She is very fair and is not afraid to get involved with the children. She knows a lot about the children.' However, not all supervisions are taking place regularly in line with the organisational policy. This means that formal opportunities to review practice are missed.

The external and internal monitoring is comprehensive. The information captures the views of the children, as well as the progress and future challenges of the service. However, the monitoring does not fully reflect the views of parents or the placing authorities. Therefore, it is not clear if these views contribute to the progress of the service and help to drive it forward.

Information about this children's home

This home provides short-break care and accommodation for up to five children who have learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities and/or sensory impairment. A local authority owns and operates this setting.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/07/2016	Full	Good
15/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
05/10/2015	Full	Good
02/03/2015	Interim	Improved 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:

- Maintain good employment practice. Ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguard children and minimise potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

This is with particular reference to the telephone verification of references and regular supervision.

- Monitor the matters set out in the regulation at least once every six months. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)

This is with particular reference to ascertaining and considering the opinions of parents and placing authorities.

- Ensure that an individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person makes a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)

This is with particular reference to seeking the views of placing authorities.

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 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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