

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	09/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC033919
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Eithne Staunton
Inspector	Jacqueline Graves

Inspection date	09/11/2016
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	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC033919

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Children are at the centre of everything in the home. Regardless of children's communication difficulties, staff ascertain their views and act upon them. Staff advocate strongly for children's rights.
- Very effective partnership working with families, schools, medical professionals and social work teams improves children's lives. A medical professional stated, 'This is truly an excellent service.' A parent considers this an 'excellent child-centred service'.
- Extremely strong leadership drives this service forward. Judged as performing at an outstanding level for the past eight years, the service continuously develops, benefiting children.
- Managers share their vision for the children's home, inspiring the staff team. They share innovative practice with other providers to promote children's outcomes in various provision in other settings.
- Children thrive as they settle in this nurturing environment. They enjoy positive relationships with staff who understand their needs very well. They experience a high-quality stay, which enriches their lives. A parent said that the home 'made a huge, positive influence' on her child's life. A member of staff said, 'The children enjoy their time here, develop their skills and are safe.'
- This is a constantly evolving service. The only suggestion for improvement from parents and professionals is to 'have more of the same'. They would like a greater number of children and families to benefit from this excellent service. A member of staff summed up the team's approach to continuous improvement: 'We are always looking at ways to improve the service we provide.'

Full report

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides short breaks for up to five children, at any one time, who have learning, sensory and physical disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
14/01/2016	Full	Outstanding
30/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
16/12/2014	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Children have the opportunity to visit a place other than their home or school. They build their confidence in staying away from home, through a highly individualised induction process, planned in an integrated way with all agencies involved in their lives. Parents appreciate that their children can have a new experience and an opportunity to visit the home or stay overnight. They value the time that they have to themselves, some for the first time in years. They can relax and trust the staff to look after their child. One parent said that their child 'can't wait until their next visit' and 'just loves coming'. By working in an integrated way with schools, health and social services, staff make a very positive contribution to improving children's lives. Some families said that home life is better as a result of their child's attendance at the home. Staff work openly with families and share good practice, particularly regarding positive behaviour support. A staff member said, 'We are able to advise parents and support them to do the same at home.' As a result of their positive experiences in the home and warm relationships with staff, children make excellent progress. Achievements include improved sleep patterns, better eye contact and waiting skills, significantly improved personal care, reduced self-harming, reduced challenging behaviour and improved communication skills. Innovative work from positive behavioural support plans helps reduce challenging behaviour. A clinical behavioural nurse praised the way in which staff work with the plans, saying, 'The home is the place where behaviours are less likely to occur.' Children may feel less anxious as staff try to understand the cause of their behaviour and what they are trying to communicate. Children have a voice. The staff welcome children's ideas and really listen to them. For example, children participate in the recruitment of new staff, and their views are central to the appointment of candidates. Regular children's meetings cover a wide agenda and all children contribute, whatever their communication needs. Staff consult children and inform them of any changes and plans, for example about plans for celebrations when children move on to adult services. This helps to reduce children's anxiety about change and transitions and helps them to feel included. Children learn very useful skills. A member of staff said, 'All children have their own skill-teaching programme they have helped set and it is reviewed regularly.' These programmes may be to help them to take more control of aspects of their lives, such as allowing an adult help them with their personal care. Other skills may help	

them to become more independent, for example, by learning to make their beds. In all ways, they gain confidence in their own capabilities. Children like rewards such as praise from staff or winning a 'Star of the Week' certificate, given in recognition of their efforts and achievements. A social worker described the home as a 'good outlet' for a child who is 'more vocal and interactive as a result'.

Children have opportunities to make friendships. A mental health worker stated that making friends is 'difficult for our client group, but staff pay close attention to compatibility'. Staff encourage children to develop skills to help them to make friends, for example, by teaching them how to greet others in a friendly manner. A parent said of their child, 'He is recognised and liked by other children.'

Children access a very wide range of activities to suit their individual preferences and needs. A parent said, 'Staff are constantly attentive to his interests.' Children benefit from a wide range of activities outside of the home, for example trips to theme parks, adventure playgrounds and horse riding. If individuals express an interest in doing something, staff facilitate this, for example, by arranging for one child to attend a football match and making considerable practical arrangements to enable another to go swimming. Children are comfortable choosing their own activities in the home. They have an excellent range of suitable toys and equipment in the well-maintained house and the adapted garden.

Activities related to events such as Diwali, Red Cross Week and St. Patrick's Day are on offer and help children to understand different cultures and religions. Children have opportunities to help others when they raise funds to support charities of their choice, such as the London Air Ambulance.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Management updated the home's safeguarding policy to reflect current risks and trained staff accordingly, for example, in the risks of radicalisation or of female genital mutilation. Ongoing staff training in protecting children who have disabilities ensures that staff know how to report any concerns. A headteacher said that the staff are 'good on the child protection network, for example, if they notice something when doing personal care for a child'. A parent said that their child is protected by, 'respectful and honest staff'. Parents feel that their children are cared for safely. One said that this is because of, 'small-sized group[s], activities they do, safe friendly environment'. Another	

parent described, 'friendly staff with a genuine concern for my child and a good, clean environment'. Regarding children's safety, a member of staff said, 'We work hard with the children to develop their ability to safeguard themselves.'

A professional from the child and adolescent mental health service said, 'Staff care for and support children well. Care and support plans are excellent.' Staff are sensitive to changes in children's behaviour and adapt care plans and risk assessments accordingly.

A robust recruitment process helps to keep children safe. Newly appointed staff describe experiencing 'thorough' checks and this is borne out in records. Ongoing monitoring of staff suitability helps to ensure that staff remain suitable to work with vulnerable children.

Communication is good. In surveys, parents 'strongly agree' that communication is effective so that children can express their needs. This includes observing changes in body language or expression in those children who do not communicate verbally, to ascertain their feelings or mood. A parent said, 'A lot of non-verbal communication developed from familiarity with his signals.' Parents are confident that staff will contact them if necessary. One parent said, 'Telephone calls are always made if anything is unclear or if there are any concerns.'

In surveys, parents 'strongly agree' that children are safe at the home. One said, 'I know of no issues, and risk assessments and management plans are thorough and child centred.' Very good-quality care plans and behaviour support plans are working documents, which help staff to meet children's needs. A member of staff said, 'The children's wishes and feelings are always a priority and we manage the risks involved.'

The induction process is very effective in helping children and their families. Staff recognise how difficult it is for parents to trust others to care for their children and for children to stay in a new environment. Through a flexible and comprehensive induction, children gain confidence to stay away from their families. This includes staff visiting children in school and detailed planning with all professionals involved in children's lives.

Medication arrangements are sound. Regular audits highlight any minor recording gaps. Staff are confident about speaking up about any errors, for example notifying a parent immediately of a missed dose. No major medication errors have occurred during this period.

The building is safe for children. It is well maintained and to a high standard of cleanliness. Regular health and safety checks make it safe and secure. Each child has an emergency evacuation plan so that staff know how to help them in the event of a fire. Children participate in fire drills unless a risk assessment suggests that this may be too upsetting for them. The independent visitor to the home has been useful in identifying some minor issues regarding the safety of the building, which staff have rectified.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
Managers lead this service with vision. They support the team to deliver the high aspirations that they have for children and their families. Staff, parents and professionals find that management always welcomes ideas and suggestions to improve the service, as well as constructive feedback. A member of staff said, 'Senior staff are contactable and approachable.' A school professional described the management and leadership as 'forward thinking, forward planning'. The manager is well qualified and experienced, having registered in 2008. Supported by an effective deputy, the management team knows the service well and strives to continuously improve it. The manager closely monitors what goes on and shares reports of her reviews of the service with the regulator and other interested parties. Monitoring by an independent visitor is also effective and helps to drive the service forward. It is impressive that the deputy regularly works shifts in the home to ensure that they check what goes on. Management regularly revises policies and procedures to ensure their relevance to the service and adherence to the Children's Homes Regulations 2015 and the quality standards. Managers directly link the guidance and regulations to records and practice, taking into account current research. One member of staff appreciated that, because of the links to standards and regulations, 'everyone knows what they are about and everything is linked to the child's experience'. Staff feel that they 'work as a team' and morale is 'very good'. They feel that the development of a staff charter improved communication and promoted cohesive teamwork, which benefits the children. With regular team meetings, team days, supervision and appraisal, staff receive strong support in their work with children. They are encouraged to raise any concerns and discuss them in an open, non-judgemental way. A member of staff said, 'We have discussions about all issues, reviewing our practice to improve the way we work.' Management invests in the staff team. Training is given prominence and ensures that children who have complex needs, for example, those requiring percutaneous endoscopic gastronomy (PEG) feeding, can access the service. Staff give many examples of how training has helped them to work positively with children. For example, one staff member said, 'Training has encouraged use of visual communication to get children to better express themselves and understand us better.' Another commends management for the best training and induction that they have ever received, saying that it is 'better than anywhere else'.	

A detailed induction and time spent supernumerary on shift helps new staff to settle in the home and get to know the children and their routines. Ongoing training and encouragement to achieve level 3 and 4 qualifications in positive behavioural support, as well as the minimum qualifications, help to build staff's expertise in working with children. One staff member said, 'My development is taken very seriously.'

Professionals and parents regard this as an outstanding service. They find very effective methods of communication and joint working in children's best interests. A headteacher described staff who are 'very good at sharing information about how children have been'. They regard the home as 'a thoroughly professional organisation that we are pleased to work with'. A social worker described 'really good multi-disciplinary working'. A school professional said, 'Communication with the staff, families, professionals, with the child at the centre, is excellent.' In surveys, parents 'strongly agree' that services provided by the children's home are excellent.

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 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 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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