

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	30/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC033919
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	London Borough of Harrow
Registered provide address	Civic Centre Station Road HARROW Middlesex HA1 2XF
Registered individual	Christopher Spencer
Registered manager	Eithne Staunton
Inspector	Christine Kennet

Inspection date	30/03/2017
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. Children continue to receive exceptional services. The registered manager and staff team offer high-quality and well-planned care. This enhances the lives of some of the most vulnerable children and their families in the local community. Currently, around 32 children regularly attend the service and benefit from receiving short breaks and day care. This helps children to continue to be cared for safely within their families and, in some cases, prevents their admission to care or hospital. The registered manager and the staff team are passionate about their work and constantly strive to improve the service. For example, they have developed excellent placement reports. These reports now include a slide show of photographs to show parents and professionals what the children have been doing and achieving during their time spent at the home. This allows professionals, who may not have visited the home, to see children enjoying their short breaks and what is on offer at the home. It also brings a real positive to the meetings, where difficult issues often need to be discussed. Children learn new skills and are helped to become more independent while at the service. For example, the staff team uses skills teaching, which focuses on simple targets and achieving performance in everyday living skills, such as feeding themselves or getting dressed with minimum support. The staff team understands children's needs and know them extremely well. Records show clear information about the children's needs and preferences. For example, communication profiles show how children communicate, their level of understanding, and what methods to use to ensure that staff can be as effective as possible. Care plans and risk assessments give simple but concise information. This helps staff find information quickly and understand essential needs without having to trawl through lengthy documents. Children are making excellent progress from their starting points as a direct result of actions of the registered manager and staff team. Due to the high level of complex needs and disability, progress can be slow, but small and consistent steps make significant differences to children and their families' lives. For example, being able to wash or dress themselves brings a completely new level of independence.	

There are many examples of positive progress children have made in the last year, for example:

- Improved sleeping patterns
- Improved communication skills
- Packing their own bag for outings
- Preparing breakfast
- Making progress in feeding themselves
- Better self-regulation and improved relationships.

Some children have been involved in sensitive key work sessions to address their challenging behaviours. Examples of careful work to support, understand, manage and change behaviours were seen, which addressed issues raised by a young person. This ensured that the young person was listened to, protected, but also helped to take responsibility for challenging behaviours.

Regular weekly meetings take place to give children a forum to express their choices, concerns and complaints. Despite many of the children having difficulties with communication, this does not become a barrier to ensuring good choices and participation. Skilled staff use various ways of communication, such as signing, key word signs, picture exchange communication system, gestures and body language. These meetings are well established and give children a great opportunity to not only make choices, but also to prepare for any staff changes or new admissions. The meetings are also an important avenue for children to receive praise for progress and to learn about cultural events.

The registered manager has started a children's experience and events diary. The staff team has taken ownership of this diary and developed it into a wonderful record of children's achievements. It is a fantastic tool and shows choices, activities, interactions, and changes, and records important events, meetings and requests for children using the service.

Children enjoy well-planned transitions when they start to attend short breaks and again when they move on to adult services. Careful planning ensures that children get to know staff prior to staying overnight by coming to visit the home for tea as a build-up to short stays. Often, children have attended for short breaks for a number of years prior to their transition to adult services. Managers and staff organise a 'goodbye' event to celebrate their time at the home. Children always leave with a completed photograph book of their time at the home and a celebration present.

On occasion, the registered manager works closely with the placing authority to support emergency placements, where this is in the child and their family's best interests. For example, emergency short break support helps to manage complex transitions and prevents additional short-term placements. On occasions, this type of arrangement has prevented a hospital admission and helped families to manage

at stressful times.

The registered manager provides strong and effective leadership and is supported by senior managers to consistently improve the service. A deputy manager, a senior team leader and a strong and experienced staff team also support her. The registered manager and deputy are qualified social workers and hold the required management qualifications. The staff team either have the NVQ level 3 training or are currently on the training and due to complete within the required timescales.

Staff development and training is given high priority. Staff appraisals inform development areas for the coming year. Leaders and managers play to staff strengths and give them responsibilities in key areas. In addition, staff development days are held with an excellent development plan supporting the continuing high standards of care and practice.

The home maintains an excellent record of keeping children safe. There is a high ratio of staff to children and lots of careful thought around care planning, which helps avoid incidents and highlights potential risks. For example, to facilitate high-level complex needs placements, the registered manager reduces the numbers of children in the home and increases staffing levels.

Safeguarding issues have been appropriately notified to Ofsted and the appropriate authorities when required. Incidents are rare; however, leaders and managers learn from errors and respond by making necessary changes to processes and practice to ensure that children are kept as safe as possible.

The home takes all its referrals from the host London borough. The registered manager has a strategic role within that borough and is involved in the referral and resource panel. She is also part of the Ofsted scrutiny committee and regularly uses research to inform and improve practice. There are excellent links with the local child and adolescent mental health services to consult on positive behaviour support plans. The home also holds wider links to the community by sponsoring a dog and raising funds for chosen charities.

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/or physical disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
11/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
14/01/2016	Full	Outstanding
30/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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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