

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	02/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC034849
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Julie Harwood
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd

Inspection date	02/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC034849

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- The leadership and management of the home is not yet good. High levels of staff sickness have placed a strain on the home. Consequently, staff are not well supervised in their work.
- Recommendations made at the last inspection have not been fully addressed. Monitoring of children's experiences and outcomes is not well evidenced and records do not demonstrate how the home is supporting children to make progress in their development. Records are not always accurate or up to date. Access to the internet is still not available to children.
- Some staff have been complacent in following procedures aimed at safeguarding children. Investigations into concerns about their competence have taken an excessively long time to complete and this has placed additional strain on the home and the staff team.
- The home needs to do more to ensure all staff and children know what to do in the event of a fire or an emergency that requires immediate evacuation of the home.
- Arrangements for the booking in and administration of medicines leave a shortage of staff available to supervise children and this is a risk to their safety and welfare.
- The home does not always have an up to date copy of the child's education, health and care (ECH) plan or other relevant plans that it needs to inform effective placement planning and care. Individual risk assessments and placement plans are not sufficiently robust.
- Restrictions on children's movement around the home are not routinely recorded as measures of restraint, nor are they carried out in accordance with children's EHC plans, placement plan and the Statement of Purpose.
- Consultation with children and their families is not well evidenced. Planning for individual children's short stays is not strong and does not ensure children have the best possible experience at every visit.
- Partnership working is not always good. In particular, transition planning does not ensure children are well prepared, in advance, for a move to adult services.

- The sensory room has been out of use for three weeks because some items have been damaged. For some children, this means their enjoyment of their short stay is reduced.

The children's home strengths

- Staff provide a warm, and friendly environment. Children like visiting the home and enjoy their short stays. Staff build strong bonds with children that help them to feel safe, secure and relaxed.
- Children enjoy the amenities offered, especially the sensory room and the newly developed outdoor play area. They enjoy and benefit from opportunities to socialise with friends.
- The home meets children's special dietary needs very well.

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

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 (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, with particular reference to communicating effectively with children who have varying communication styles and ascertaining their views about their care, the registered person must ensure— (1) that children receive care from staff who— (c) take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (a) ensure that staff— (i) ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; (ii) help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; (iii) help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; (iv) regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care; (vi) help each child to prepare for any review of the child's relevant plans and to make the child's views, wishes and feelings known for the purposes of that review.	28/02/2016
8: The education standard In order to meet the education standard with particular reference to supporting children's education and learning through the	31/01/2016

provision of access to technology, including the internet and large-screen monitors, the registered person must ensure— (b) that each child has access to appropriate equipment, facilities and resources to support the child’s learning.	
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must enable, inspire and lead a culture in relation to the children’s home that— (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; (g) demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— (ii) feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received.	28/02/2016
16: Statement of purpose Notify Ofsted of any revisions to the home’s statement of purpose and send Ofsted a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3) (b))	31/01/2016
16: Statement of purpose Ensure that the statement of purpose covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. In particular, in relation to the quality and purpose of care, include details about how gates and locked doors are used to block off areas of the home at certain times and the reasons for this. (Regulation 16 (1))	31/01/2016
21: Privacy and access Ensure that any limitation placed on a child’s privacy or access to any area of the home’s premises is intended to safeguard each child; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and if necessary revised; and allows children as much freedom as is	31/01/2016

possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. In particular, ensure that any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home and any modifications to the environment of the home are informed by a rigorous assessment of the child's needs, are properly recorded in children's plans and are kept under regular review. This relates to the use of locked doors and gates within the home and to the use of viewing panels on children's bedrooms. (Regulation 21 (c))	
25: Fire precautions After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, make arrangements for persons working at the home to receive suitable training in fire prevention; and ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that persons working at the home and, so far as reasonably practicable, children are aware of the procedures to be followed in case of fire. In particular, ensure that staff know how to respond to a fire at night and records demonstrate that staff and children practise evacuation procedures. (Regulation 25 (1) (2))	31/01/2016
33: Employment of staff Ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. This includes regular relief workers as well as permanent staff members. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))	31/01/2016
36: Children's case records Ensure that case records are kept in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 36 (2)(d))	28/02/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ☐ continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangement in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, ensure their placement plan, agreed between the home the parent and the placing authority, includes details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day to day basis (The Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the Quality Standards, page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- ☐ work with the placing authority to ensure that each child's transition is planned

and help each child to prepare for leaving both practically and emotionally. (The Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the Quality Standards, page 57, paragraph 11.9)

- ☐ ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities both inside and outside the home (where appropriate). In addition, ensure the sensory room is made available to children by removing or replacing damaged items (The Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the Quality Standards, page 31, paragraph 6.5)
- ☐ strengthen administration of medicines practice to ensure that children receive all the medicines they need. In particular, where a prescribed medicine is not provided by a parent at the start of a short break, take action to explore and record the reason for this; and thereby ensure the child receives all the medicines they need (The Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the Quality Standards, page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- ☐ maintain good employment practice. In particular, ensure that concerns about staff practice that lead to disciplinary action are dealt with promptly so that any associated staff shortages can be quickly resolved (The Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- ☐ ensure that children's case records are kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry and that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Ensure also that case records include the relevant plans and information outlined in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015 (The Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the Quality Standards, page 62, paragraph 14.3 and 13.4)
- ☐ use the guidance provided in the Department for Education's framework in 2014 for reviewing the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the home (The Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the Quality Standards, page 64, paragraph 15.1)
- ☐ plan staffing levels to ensure that they meet the needs of children and can respond flexibly to unexpected events or opportunities. In particular, ensure sufficient staff are on duty to provide proper supervision for children when staff are involved in medicine administration and food preparation. (The Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the Quality Standards, page 54, paragraph 10.15)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a local authority and is registered to provide short break care for up to six children with complex needs including learning disabilities, physical disabilities and sensory impairment.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/03/2015	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
30/09/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
25/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
11/12/2013	CH - Full	Adequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	requires improvement
The home's placement plans do not provide good levels of detail about how the home is to support each child or how it will promote the child's enjoyment and development of new skills. Records do not reflect how successful the home is at meeting a child's identified needs and the difference their interventions are making to the child's overall experiences and outcomes. For example, where it is identified that a child needs support with toileting, records do not show how this is provided and how effective the home's methods are at helping the child to become more independent. A parent explained how she would like the home to help her child develop self-care skills: 'They do a marvellous job but I'd like to see him make his own drinks.' Children's communication and sensory needs are not fully considered when activities are planned and consequently, children do not always enjoy their short stay as well as they might. For example, although the home owns a portable large screen television for the benefit of children with sight impairment, this is not always made available to those children during their short stays. Although children use alternative communication methods in school, these are not routinely available and used by staff to supplement and facilitate communication in the home. Staff often rely on their knowledge of the child to inform planning and decision-making. They respond well to children's behaviour, recognising and addressing their immediate needs and wishes. However, their efforts to engage children in the development of the home or of the local authority children in care participation group have been limited. Consequently, the child's voice is not strong in the home. The children's guide is currently under review. The home has recognised that the current document does not include information about the children's commissioner and is not available in different communication styles so it does not meet the needs of many of the children who use the service. Consultation with children about the development of a new guide has begun but more needs to be done to ensure as many children as possible can contribute to this project. Children have not had access to the internet since before the last inspection because of delays in setting up Wi-Fi in the home. This means they have missed out on opportunities to support their learning and have been unable to access websites they enjoy.	

Transition planning is not good. For example, limited and ineffective work has been done with a child who is very settled at the home and is shortly due to move on to adult services. The staff are aware that liaison with the transition social worker has not been effective despite this being a review recommendation. This has been exacerbated by several changes of transition social worker. A professional explained, 'I expect staff to meet with the new place and tell them what she likes...they know her really well. They will need to go with her for visits to help her understand that's where she'll be going in the future...I am concerned about how this transition is being managed.'

To ensure robust administration of medicines, two members of staff manage the booking in, counting and safe storage of medicines received for each child at the start of their short stay. Staff do not always follow up with parents if a prescribed medicine they are expecting is not sent in. This means the home cannot be sure that children are receiving the treatment they need, even though they administer the medicines provided safely.

Furthermore, the arrangements for booking in medicines impacts on the number of staff available to supervise children and sometimes results in one member of staff looking after four or more children. This is at a time when children need high levels of support to settle in to the home following their arrival from school. The home's ability to supervise and support children effectively is therefore reduced at this time.

The amenities at the home are good. The outdoor play area has been developed and more bikes and go-karts are now available as well as the sensory garden and specialist play equipment. Children particularly enjoy the garden in the summer months. There is a wide selection of sensory toys and games and children enjoy the use of televisions or DVD players in their bedrooms as well as televisions, music players and electronic games and tablets in the communal areas. There is an indoor soft play area and a sensory room, which some children particularly enjoy. Unfortunately, the sensory room has been out of use for the last three weeks because of damage to a piece of equipment which the home is struggling to get repaired. Consequently, some children have not enjoyed their visits to the home as much as usual.

The home has an adapted vehicle but outings are limited because staffing levels do not always allow for the high levels of supervision children need in the community. In particular, the usual staffing quota of three staff is not always sufficient to enable some children to go out and others to remain at the home with safe staffing levels. Giving feedback to the home, a parent said: 'I do think more activities should be offered, day trips, camping etc. Children should be offered a bigger range of activities'.

The home is taking action to address this. New rotas were introduced the week of

this inspection. They provide for four staff to be available some of the time so that more children can enjoy a wider range of activities and outings, without compromising children's safety. This is as yet untested.

The home takes account of children's individual needs and personalities when allocating short breaks. Wherever possible, children visit at the same time as others with whom they have formed friendships or whose needs are compatible with their own. For example, consideration is given to children's levels of vulnerability and their ability to tolerate noise so that, wherever possible, their enjoyment is not compromised by staying at the home alongside others whose needs are very different. A parent commented, 'She has become a very sociable little girl.'

Staff get to know children well. They form secure and trusting relationships which enable children to feel safe and comfortable during their short breaks. A professional commented, 'It's a pleasure to see how relaxed, comfortable and settled she is there'. Children say they like the home and parents report that children are happy to visit the home. Parents are confident that staff keep their children safe and provide them with a welcoming and enjoyable experience. Special dietary needs are well met and this promotes children's health. Hospital passports are held on each child's file with all relevant medical information and signed consent, should a child require emergency medical treatment. Social workers are satisfied that children are well looked after and happy.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
Staff lock doors within the home when they judge that children need to stay in the lounge with close staff supervision. Restricting children's access to bedrooms, the bathroom and the small lounge in this way is not recorded as a measure of control, nor is it recorded in children's placement plans, risk assessments or daily case notes. This is not open and transparent practice and means the home cannot demonstrate it is restricting children's liberty only when required for safety reasons and only in line with their relevant plans. Children's risk assessments are not always reviewed every six months in line with the home's policy so the home cannot demonstrate risk assessments remain up to date and viable. Additionally, staff routinely close gates between different areas of the home. Although most children know how to open the gates, staff use gates as a means of deterring children from accessing the kitchen, bedrooms and bathrooms when	

others are using these areas. The use of gates in this way is not recorded in the statement of purpose, children's risk assessments or behaviour management strategies. Nor is it considered as part of daily planning. This means there is no ongoing assessment of whether it is necessary to close gates for children's safety or whether to do so is restricting some children's movement around the home unnecessarily.

Following a serious incident in which a child was injured by another child, the home has reviewed and increased its staffing levels at certain times. Consequently, children whose behaviour could pose a threat to others are more closely supervised and all children's safety is better promoted.

Staff follow fire safety measures that promote the safety of the environment. A minority of staff have received fire safety training in the last year. Some staff have not updated their fire safety training since 2011. The home cannot evidence that all staff and children have practised evacuation procedures in the event of an emergency. Guidance provided in the fire safety plan is insufficiently detailed. This means that staff do not have clear instructions about the best way to protect children in the event of a fire at night.

Confidential health information relating to a small minority of children who no longer have short breaks at the home is held in the medication room. This does not protect children's confidential information in line with data protection.

Providing a safe environment for children is a priority in the home. Routine health and safety checks ensure that the premises are well maintained and that property repairs are reported and addressed quickly in most instances. Specialist equipment including specialist beds, chairs, bathing facilities and hoists are well maintained. External doors are kept locked so that children who are all very vulnerable in the community cannot leave the premises without staff. The garden is fully enclosed and safe from traffic. It provides children with safe access to a large and varied outdoor play area.

Children feel safe in the home and parents express confidence that they are safe. One said, 'I am happy she is safe and her needs are met.' Accidents and injuries to children are recorded and reported. Serious incidents which result in an injury to a child are appropriately reported to the local authority safeguarding team and to parents. The home reports concerns about staff practice to the local authority designated officer and staff are appropriately suspended during investigation of incidents. Reflection on incidents leads to improvements in practice. This promotes children's safety.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
The manager is a qualified social worker who is suitably experienced and qualified to lead and manage a social care setting. She has many year experience of managing children's homes in both the private sector and local authority. She has been the registered manager since February 2014 when she transferred to this service from another short break children's home that she had managed for four years. The deputy manager has been absent for over three months and her post has not been filled. This has reduced the manager's capacity to drive forward improvements in the service. In addition, staff sickness and suspension has meant over 25% of the staff team have not been available for work over a period of several months. This has placed additional pressure on the staff team who cover shortages in the rota wherever possible to promote continuity of care for children. Regular relief staff also assist, as required. Although the home responded swiftly and appropriately following an incident of malpractice, the organisation has taken a significant period of time to reach a decision. The manager has repeatedly sought a resolution to the matter but senior managers have not prioritised it. Consequently, the home has been without key staff for over three months and this has placed an added burden on the staff team. The manager provides informal advice and support to staff, however, one-to-one staff supervision is sporadic and several staff have not received this for some months. Consequently, staff do not have the opportunity to formally reflect on their practice and discuss the progress of children for whom they are the key worker. This does not promote good planning and review of the home's work with individual children. Staff team meetings and daily handover meetings have little focus on reviewing individual children's needs and progress, so it is not clear how the home is using person-centred planning to promote positive experiences or to help children develop their skills. The manager monitors the operation of the home but does not monitor children's experiences and outcomes well. Consequently, the manager cannot fully assess what difference the home is making to children's lives. She cannot identify the impact of current staffing levels on children's individual experiences and skills development as she does not monitor and evaluate the activities or outings children participate in. The quality of recording has improved but remains a concern. Information in records is not always accurate, up to date, signed or dated. Records do not fully reflect the good work that takes place in the home. For example, they do not	

provide details of how the home is supporting a child to improve his self-care skills.

Liaison with parents and partner agencies is adequate but not strong. For example, the home does not have up to date information about a child's health because it does not keep in touch regularly with parents and social workers. Up to date short break review reports, looked after children review reports and education, health and care reports are requested but not always pursued. This means the home does not always have the child's up-to-date, relevant plans to inform placement planning.

The home's statement of purpose has been updated to reflect how the home intends to meet the Quality Standards. The reviewed document has not been shared with Ofsted. This does not impact on children's care but impedes the regulator from maintaining a good overview of the home. A location assessment has been compiled but it does not demonstrate a good assessment of the suitability of the location, taking proper account of local amenities, proximity to hospitals and emergency services, and any safeguarding concerns that might arise from children's bedrooms overlooking the carpark.

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 looked after children 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 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 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 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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