

# SC034849

Registered provider: Cheshire West and Chester Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This local authority home is a short-breaks service for disabled children. It provides short breaks for up to three children over four nights each week from Thursday to Monday.

The registered manager has been registered since 12 March 2018.

**Inspection dates:** 2 to 3 May 2019

|                                                                                           |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>good</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

|                                                             |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | good |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|

|                                           |      |
|-------------------------------------------|------|
| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | good |
|-------------------------------------------|------|

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 19 July 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement    |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 19/07/2018      | Full            | Good                    |
| 22/02/2018      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness |
| 18/05/2017      | Full            | Good                    |
| 23/02/2017      | Interim         | Improved effectiveness  |

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

### **Statutory requirements**

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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 within the given timescales.

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

In particular, young people's feedback and opinions about the quality of care they receive should be included in the quality of care report.

- Case records must be kept up-to-date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

This refers specifically to young people's health needs being clearly recorded across all of their plans.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Young people enjoy coming for their short breaks and the range of activities and opportunities that they may not experience with their families, such as days out to an ice-cream farm and the zoo. The staff work flexibly and closely with families to ensure that young people can visit for the whole day during holiday periods so that they can have a fun-filled time.

Young people spoke of their positive relationships with the staff and the activities that they can enjoy. One said, 'I feel safe. I trust every member of staff who works here.' She described the staff as 'helpful and kind', and the home as 'calm and relaxing'.

Young people are supported to develop their independence, social and communication skills and self-care skills at an appropriate pace via a five-stage progressive and measurable approach. The objectives are devised in consultation with families and social care professionals to ensure that they focus on key areas for development. This is an expanding area of the home's practice to enable young people to achieve the most from their short breaks and develop their confidence. The staff know the young people and their needs exceptionally well. They carefully record the small steps of progress that young people make, and young people receive certificates to celebrate their achievements as their skills develop.

The home works very closely with families and social care, health and education professionals so that young people's needs are carefully assessed and met consistently. This provides a continuous approach to supporting young people across different settings, including the use of their preferred method of communication. Before each stay, staff contact families to ensure that information is up to date and find whether there is anything additional that staff should know. The staff actively contribute to meetings to review young people's progress and to identify and support any changing needs.

Staff ensure that young people who are new to the service have a positive transition, with introductory visits prior to overnight stays. Relevant information is obtained in meetings with parents and social care professionals as part of this process, and the staff ensure that the transition is flexible and at the young person's pace. The home has produced a video to share with young people so that they know what the home looks like and what they can enjoy during visits. Equally, for young people moving on to adult services or other provisions, the staff are involved in transition planning at an early stage to ensure that relevant information is shared to support successful moves.

The manager and the staff team are developing greater links in the community so that young people can access gym facilities and go to the library during their stays. The home has developed successful coffee mornings and seasonal events for young people, families and professionals to increase consultation and to raise awareness of other

services available to young people and their families.

The staff consult young people regularly and creatively using bespoke communication styles to gain their views. They use visual aids, for example, to offer different activities, and carefully observe young people's responses that indicate their preferences. Staff carefully match young people when planning their visits. They are aware of existing friendships and try to plan so that friends can spend time together during stays. Equally, they listen to young people so that they can have separate short breaks, particularly brothers and sisters, who might prefer individual time.

Monthly consultations, sometimes with staff support, capture young people's views about what they enjoy doing at the home and what is going well for them. Young people have been involved in designing the bedroom and communal area decor and colour schemes, creating mood boards of the themes that they would like. Their requests, such as to have an area where they can read quietly with staff or make drinks and snacks more independently, have been responded to. This ensures that the environment is inviting and homely for short breaks.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Young people are well protected from harm during their stays. Families are confident that their children are safe and receive high-quality care from skilled and experienced staff.

Risk assessments and management strategies are regularly and dynamically reviewed to ensure that staff are aware of, and can respond to, young people's vulnerabilities and changing needs. Appropriate levels of supervision and agreed day-to-day approaches, such as key-coded doors and specialist harnesses for car travel, mean that children are protected from harm, travel safely and, for example, do not go missing from the home.

The staff have a deep understanding of each young person's needs and signs of anxiety or upset. They use their positive relationships to offer support or distraction to help the young person to manage their emotions. The staff know strategies that can help individual young people to self-soothe and become calm, such as using the sensory room, watching their favourite television programmes or listening to their favourite music. This calm and confident approach to de-escalation means that physical intervention is not required to manage young people's behaviour. Risk-management strategies are used consistently. For example, a young person who may self-injure by banging his head is advised that he may need to wear his helmet if he continues, before it is used, to give him the opportunity to self-regulate his emotions.

Staff meet young people's personal needs with sensitivity and dignity. Many children have long-term conditions or health needs associated with their disability. The staff use their knowledge and skills to respond to any issues, such as a young person having a seizure, to ensure that they are given the appropriate medical support. Although staff have a thorough understanding and key information is held on the daily working file, some records do not clearly cross-reference health needs.

Robust arrangements are in place to manage the administration of medication. The staff are responsive to updates in their training and adapt records to reflect current practice. The staff are clear with families that the service require appropriate consent for administering any medication covertly and that all medication must be appropriately labelled. They seek advice from health professionals to ensure that they can communicate why a young person's admission needs to be delayed, for example if a young person is refusing to take their medication. This means that they can work creatively with families and other professionals to find an alternative approach, such as a parent visiting the young person during their stay to give them their medication.

The home's locality risk assessment is used dynamically and is updated to reflect any emerging potential risks to young people staying at the home, such as the opening of a charitable project nearby.

Any welfare concerns are shared with the appropriate professionals promptly, so that young people get the support that they need to keep them safe.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The home is led by a highly committed, effective and aspirational manager who now holds an appropriate management qualification. She is keen to further the development of the home and is working closely with other professionals in the local authority. The service is currently applying to register as a Makaton-friendly home.

The enthusiastic, consistent and stable staff have taken increased ownership of the home. They are working more flexibly to ensure that young people are central to planning so that their experiences are enhanced. Individual staff members have taken on champions' roles, particularly in Makaton and consultation with young people, to drive continuous improvements. They are passionate in their support of young people to develop their independence skills. The staff understand each young person's needs and ensure that the day-to-day planning of their care supports them to achieve and keeps them safe.

The staff speak positively of the support from leaders and managers, and report that they receive regular and effective supervision that enables them to reflect on their practice. The staff meet regularly as a team to review young people's progress and receive good-quality training to ensure that their practice remains of a high standard. Learning from training drives improvements to practice, such as recording the administration of medication, to reflect current legislation and advice. Some other records are not always signed by the author, but these minor shortfalls do not compromise the safety or well-being of young people.

External professionals and families speak highly of the commitment of staff and how they support young people during their visits. They comment on how young people have benefited from having short breaks and how well the staff communicate and work in partnership.

The manager has effective systems in place to monitor how young people make progress against their set objectives and, increasingly, she uses photographic evidence to show their achievements. She ensures that parents receive a summary of their child's progress after each visit so that they are kept updated. Where objectives are not realistic, the manager sensitively works with families to consider alternatives.

Robust monitoring systems support the manager's understanding of the quality of care delivered in the home to drive continuous improvements and development plans. While the views of families and professionals are included in the report produced, she has not included those of the young people using the service. However, the reports from independent monitoring do now contain the views of young people and observations of practice.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.



## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** SC034849

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Cheshire West and Chester Council

**Registered provider address:** 58 Nicholas Street, Chester CH1 2NP

**Responsible individual:** Emma Taylor

**Registered manager:** Sarah Pay

## Inspector

Karen Willson, social care inspector

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