

SC035954

Registered provider: Metropolitan Borough of Wirral

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This service provides short-term breaks for eight young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, physical disabilities and learning disabilities. In addition, one child is able to live at the home. The local authority owns and manages the home.

Inspection dates: 1 to 2 November 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 1 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Children and young people make exceptional and sustained progress. They are increasing in confidence in their own abilities.
- Children and young people thoroughly enjoy their stays and are becoming much more independent as a result.
- A highly committed and dedicated staff team, which is passionate about providing the best care and experiences possible, cares for the children and young people.
- A key strength is the support provided to the children's and young people's families. Families are extremely complimentary about the staff and also the service provided, referring to it as a 'lifeline' and 'a second home'.
- Staff 'go above and beyond' to ensure that the young people who are now living at the home enjoy as far as possible a family environment. This is particularly evident in the lengths that staff went to for one young person at Christmas.
- Staff have an innate understanding of each child's and young person's needs. As a result, each child and young person receives a highly individualised care package.
- The registered manager and staff are extremely committed to the continuous improvement of the service. This has seen many improvements since the last inspection, including the provision of new outdoor play equipment.
- The registered manager and staff use research effectively to enhance the service and improve the outcomes for children and young people.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Monitoring by the registered manager is very good and immediate action is taken to address any shortfalls. However, the identified shortfalls and action taken to address them are not always reflected in the written reports, such as in the debriefings in the physical intervention records and epilepsy care plans. This is a recording issue and does not affect the care provided to children and young people.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
21/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
13/10/2015	Full	Outstanding

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

Recommendations

- Enhance further the registered manager's monitoring of the service. The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strength and possible weakness in the home's care, which will be captured in the written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next 6 months of delivery within the home and how these actions will be addressed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)

In particular, ensure that the recording of staff debriefing interviews, following an intervention, and of the content of epilepsy care plans are sufficiently detailed.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people enjoy extremely positive relationships with all staff. They thoroughly enjoy their stays and their laughter reverberates throughout the home. Parents said that their children cannot wait to come here and that the staff cannot do enough for them.

Staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of each child. Because of this, one young person who experiences high anxiety with new environments is now able to enjoy a three-night stay, as opposed to just overnight. This is as a direct result of the staff's support in helping her to feel safe. For others, it was about establishing a good sleep pattern. This has happened. As a result, the young person is happier and more able to engage with staff and school, and staff have seen a reduction in challenging behaviours.

Excellent partnership working with other agencies is an intrinsic part of the care planning. Staff members attend all meetings about their key children, even when they are on a rest day. Key workers work hard to ensure that they have the most up-to-date information on each child prior to their stay. This information is shared effectively with the whole staff team, including the cooks and domestic staff, as they are seen as an integral part of the service. Consequently, the child's or young person's stay is tailored to their specific needs and interests. This supports and enhances their fun and enjoyment, as well as their independence and self-care needs.

The introduction of individualised 'Arrow' charts further enhances each child's or young person's independence. Staff talk to parents about what they would like their child to achieve, and work on this in partnership with them, for example supporting young people to brush their teeth. This is broken down into small steps, such as picking up their toothbrush with support and moving through various stages to reach their end goal. Staff are realistic in their expectations and understand that there may be step-backs in this

process. However, the staff have high aspirations for each child and young person and do their utmost to see that they achieve to their full potential.

Social workers are very complimentary about the home. One commented upon the excellent support given to a child and their family during an emergency placement over the Christmas period last year. Staff rallied together and created a family environment in which the child and their family could enjoy Christmas Day together. The social worker said, 'The family still recall positive memories of that day and how welcome staff made them feel.' Staff said that there was no way that the family was not going to be together and that they could not have enjoyed their Christmas if they had not made it as magical for them as possible. This is testament to the dedication of the registered manager and staff to 'go the extra mile' for the children and their families.

Children's and young people's healthcare needs are known, understood and very well supported. Staff are aware of the complexities of some children's health and how it can deteriorate quickly. They take swift decisive action to ensure that young people receive medical care and attention when they need it, for example calling the emergency services as per their individual plans. Healthcare plans are comprehensive, but on some occasions epilepsy care plans are not as robust. This is a recording issue and its impact is minimised by staff's excellent knowledge of the child or young person.

Children's and young people's individual communication styles are exceptionally well supported and developed. Staff are highly skilled and use every means available to them, such as speech, pictures and body language, to support and develop children's and young people's communication. For example, when the inspector was speaking with one young person, the staff sensitively gave him the time and space to understand the questions being asked and to think through his responses, while offering helpful verbal and signed prompts. Consequently, the young person was able to communicate his views and opinions effectively.

Children and young people were eager to talk about their day. They shook with excitement as they spoke about the Halloween party planned for that night and how they were going 'trick or treating'. They excitedly played with various masks before deciding on the best one for them. The activities are exceptionally well planned with the full involvement of the children and young people. One young person does not like Halloween, but said that she was happy for the staff to decorate the home and to have a party. She said that she was happy for this to take place but that she did not want to join in, and explained that she was going to watch a film with staff. As a result, she felt listened to and that her wishes had been fully taken into account by staff. Consultation with children and young people is a high priority for all staff.

Transitions in and out of the home are managed with the utmost care. The principal of a school wrote, 'I would like to take this opportunity to express my admiration for the way in which the management and staff team, firstly, managed the severe problem behaviour initially presented by (name of child) and, secondly, organised his successful transition to (name of school)... Staff consistently demonstrated a high level of care and commitment towards (name of child), for example the opportunities to visit him five times prior to the

move to get to know him and prepare him for reintegration to school.’ As a result, this young person settled in well and continues to make good progress. A social worker who had a young person placed under difficult circumstances spoke of the ‘the outstanding support’ provided. They said, ‘Staff swiftly helped (name of child) to settle into routines. The fact that his behaviour stabilised is testament to the manner in which he is being supported.’ The social worker went on to say that ‘(name of child) feels happy’.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

The safety of children and young people is at the very heart of everything that staff do and is a major strength of the home. Staff know and energetically pursue robust procedures for child protection. They attend appropriate training to refresh and maintain their knowledge. The home takes appropriate and decisive action, and liaises well with external agencies to safeguard and protect children and young people. Consequently, they are safe and feel safe here. High staffing ratios mean that children and young people are supervised well.

Staff are not risk averse and undertake dynamic risk assessments to ensure that children and young people can engage in activities of their choice, for example sourcing safe play areas so that they can climb and explore safely. Staff are skilled in anticipating any related dangers or risks associated with particular activities, such as a child’s lack of understanding about road safety. Consequently, they are able to engage in self-chosen activities of their choice. Children and young people are encouraged as far as possible to be responsible for their own safety, for example making sure that their seatbelt is secure. This approach enhances their confidence and self-esteem.

Children and young people do not go missing. Procedures are in place, should this occur, and staff are well versed in these. Medication, including rescue medication, is carefully administered and is stored safely. Staff are proactive in ensuring that they have the correct information about medication if there has been a change. This includes contacting the child’s or young person’s doctor for clarification. This keeps children and young people safe from any risk of maladministration of medications.

Staff are aware of the risk of child sexual exploitation to their children and young people. They said, ‘We are supporting the most vulnerable children and young people and, as such, it is vital we are aware of the signs of child sexual exploitation’. Following some research about the issues that arose following the social care enquiry into events in Rochdale, staff have looked in more depth at the possibility of their children and young people being at increased risk of criminal exploitation. Work is ongoing on this topic with staff and other professionals in order to minimise any potential risks. Staff are keenly aware of the dangers posed by the internet. They robustly check any sites that young people may be accessing and, where necessary, advise parents on the content and suitability.

Effective monitoring at the home means that risks are quickly identified and minimised. The home is generally well maintained. However, it is starting to show some signs of wear and tear. The registered manager has sourced funding to have the home redecorated.

Each bedroom is personalised to reflect the uniqueness of each child or young person. All of their belongings are safely stored between their stays.

Social workers commend staff on the work that they undertake to provide consistent boundaries for the children and young people. As a result, the incidents of challenging behaviour are reducing. There is the occasional need for physical intervention. However, this is only undertaken as a last resort and always at the minimum level. Records of physical intervention are well recorded, although there is not always a link to the staff debriefing after the event. The independent person identified this and the registered manager took action to revise the records further during the inspection to provide greater clarity.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

A dynamic and highly committed registered manager leads the home. She is extremely experienced and enthusiastic, and has the young people at the very centre of everything that she does. This enthusiasm cascades throughout the staff team. One member of staff said, 'We strive to improve ourselves and better our services at all times. Nothing can hold us back. We advocate and safeguard our young people, and enable them to fulfil their true potential... I am proud of where I work and my colleagues. We are more like a family than just people who work together.'

This is an organic setting that is continually evolving to meet the diverse needs of the children and young people, for example with the introduction of the new children's and young people's guide. This now includes recorded messages to tell children and young people about the home, as well as a range of pictures. Consequently, this is an inclusive and accessible document.

A number of new staff have recently joined the team. This is the first recruitment of new staff for some time. A robust induction process is in place and new staff said that they felt welcomed and supported. All staff receive regular professional supervision. They said that they felt that this helped them to focus on their achievements and ways in which to improve care.

Effective monitoring of the home helps to drive forward improvements. The independent person provides detailed reports that identify areas for development. The registered manager and senior staff regularly monitor the records at the home and immediately address any shortfalls. However, this information is not always recorded in their written report. This is a minor shortfall and does not affect the care provided. The registered manager has excellent oversight of the home. She understands the strengths and areas for development, and these are included in the plans for the service.

The home makes good use of research to enhance the knowledge and skills of the staff and to improve outcomes for young people. Staff receive regular updates from Ofsted and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which they utilise well to inform their practice.

The registered manager and staff are aspirational and have consistently high yet reasonable goals for children and young people. They go out of their way to ensure that children and young people have the support that they need. Staff are currently undergoing training with school staff on a new communication system that is being introduced for some children and young people. This is a testimony to the ongoing commitment of staff to improve outcomes for young people.

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: SC035954

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, Education Department, Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH41 4FD

Responsible individual: Nikki Kenny

Registered manager: Debra Kewley

Inspector

Chris Scully, social care inspector

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