

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	12/10/2015
Unique reference number	SC035954
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Metropolitan Borough of Wirral
Registered person address	Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, Education Department, Hamilton Building, Conway Street, BIRKENHEAD, Merseyside, CH41 4FD

Responsible individual	Simon Fisher
Registered manager	Debra Edwards
Inspector	Elaine Allison

Inspection date	13/10/2015
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	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceeds 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	Outstanding
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC035954

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Children and staff develop excellent relationships with each other and children enjoy their short breaks in the home.
- Children are safe and staff fully understand their vulnerabilities and make sure they are protected from harm.
- Care plans are of an excellent quality. They are comprehensive and highly individualised.
- Care plans are developed in full consultation with other agencies, parents and children, where possible. They are reviewed promptly in line with the children's changing needs.
- The staff's excellent communication is highly effective in ensuring that they know, understand and can meet children's wishes and feelings.
- Behaviour management is very effective and helps children to deal with their frustrations more effectively.
- Planning for stays is exceptionally thorough and ensures that children get the best out of their stay.
- Staff are excellent at working with parents. Their supportive and reassuring approach reduces parents' anxieties.
- Inter-agency working is exceptionally successful in ensuring that children are cared for exceedingly well. The manager actively challenges other agencies and professionals and accepts challenge from them as a useful tool to improve practice.
- Staff are of a high calibre and go over and above to ensure that children benefit greatly from their short break stays.
- Leadership and management are inspirational and ambitious for children and the development of the service.

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

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that records kept electronically can be easily accessed by anyone with a legitimate need to view it. This relates to staff having difficulty in accessing computers to enter or view records on children. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 14.2)

Full report

Information about this children's home

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

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/11/2014	Full	Outstanding
28/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress
27/06/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	outstanding
Children referred to the service have extremely complex needs. The referral systems and planning for children's care are extremely thorough. Excellent inter-agency working ensures the short break arrangement is an integrated part of the care planning for each child. Highly individualised care plans are developed and reviewed to ensure that children settle well into the home. The care provided is flexible and kept in line with children's ever changing needs. Children are welcomed sensitively when starting a series of breaks. Children who are anxious about going to stay at the home are exceptionally well supported to settle. Introductions to the home for each child are carefully assessed, planned for and reviewed to ensure that they settle and can make the best out of their stays. Through the support and patience of staff, children go on to form trusting and secure relationships with them. Likewise parents who are anxious about leaving their child in the home are exceptionally well supported and are provided with high levels of reassurance. One parent said 'I was anxious about the first time my son stayed overnight, but staff gave me re-assurance and went out of their way to keep in touch with me and even put up with me phoning every hour.' Staff get to know children, their needs and their likes and dislikes extremely well. They are attentive to the children in their care and their practice is totally child focused. Children's complex needs are not seen as a barrier to their progress and staff ensure that children can make the best out of their short break. A parent stated, 'my son has behavioural problems which staff have always dealt with in an excellent manner, as a result these behaviours are rarely or ever seen any longer during his visits.' Staff are exceptionally skilled and creative at communicating with children, whatever their means of communication. Staff pick up on small cues and generally understand what they are trying to communicate. A parent said 'his speech is difficult to understand; the staff take time to understand him and can use signing with him if necessary.' This means that children's wishes views are established and they can actively participate in day-to-day and, where they are able, more complex decisions about their lives.	

Staff understand that children's emotions can be communicated through their behaviour; they take great pains to ensure that trigger points are avoided through the effective and patient use of diversion techniques. Training on de-escalation and diffusion techniques are shared with parents. This ensures continuity of care for young people both in their home environment and in the short break service.

There are excellent links to the schools that children attend and they are well supported to get into school following a short break. An example of this is the excellent use of 'two-way diaries' used to ensure relevant information regarding children's individual needs are met in both school and the home.

Children come to stay in a high quality, stable and consistent environment. It is child-focused and stimulating an example of this is the sensory room which the children really enjoy using. Children have staff allocated to them who work with them through their stay on an individual basis. Their day-to-day needs are catered for in line with their needs and preferred routines, such as staff sensitively supporting children in their individual personal care. Activities, including making pizzas, arts and crafts and meals from around the world nights are interesting and varied and are aimed at helping children have fun while learning new skills and developing friendships. Children's achievements, however seemingly small, are celebrated. Some children have achieved certificates in 'being healthy' for brushing their teeth and others have been awarded certificates for cooking skills.

When children move on to other services staff work exceptionally well with the new provider to ensure that children's needs and preferences are known. A professional from another setting commented 'they are excellent at providing all the information required to ensure a smooth transition and continue with communicating afterwards which provides great continuity.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
The home is a safe place for children to live in. They trust and feel confident with the staff team and enjoy spending time with them. Parents speak highly of the care provided to their children. One said, 'I am very happy that my son is well	

looked after and kept safe during his visits, it means I can enjoy a break as well.'

Children do not go missing. This is due to the high staffing ratios which mean young people are effectively supervised at all times. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place that staff make good use of to keep children safe, for example in the safe administration of medication.

Children using the service have very complex health needs; meeting these is seen as the highest priority. A parent said 'staff are well in tune with the children in their care enabling them to identify and reduce risk before incidents occur or by timely intervention to diffuse.'

Bullying does not take place in the home. However, all staff are alert to the possibility of young people upsetting others. Staffing levels are high and levels of supervision are excellent, care planning is very strong and individualised and relationships between young people are excellent. If children are upset or anxious staff sensitively respond and skilfully help them to manage their emotions.

The staff team understands how to safeguard young people including those who are additionally vulnerable because of their disabilities. They receive regular training in this area. Safeguarding young people is a key component of care planning and delivery.

The home's care planning process includes arrangements to identify and address potential individualised risks posed to young people in their day-to-day care and activities. This includes an individual emergency evacuation plan from the home for every child and young person. This ensures that children and young people are safe and protected from any potential harm.

Recruitment and selection of staff is thorough and ensures children are only looked after by staff that are appropriately checked in order to work in the home. This ensures young people are protected.

Children are protected from hazards by a wide range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and children know what to do in case of an emergency. There are suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised to protect young people.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
The Registered Manager provides strong leadership. She has an inclusive, open management style which staff value and reflect in their practice with children. She is appropriately experienced with over 10 years in a senior management role and has a level five management qualification. She inspires confidence in external professionals and parents and leads her staff team by example by modelling best practice. Comments about her and her team included that she is 'excellent leader, who believes, encourages and supports staff.' And that there is, 'a dedicated staff team who are reassuring and supportive.' The manager actively challenges other services and equally accepts constructive criticism as a means to improve practice in the home. For example, she refused requests by the local authority to extend the short break service to a child whose complex needs could not be met at the home. The manager responds effectively to any recommendations made by the independent visitor, for example by ensuring a robust management system was put in place to record weekly health and safety checks. She has clear plans for the development of the service and is ambitious for the children the home cares for. The Statement of Purpose clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the service and how these will be met; <i>'To offer a warm, welcoming, stimulating, child-friendly and non-stigmatising environment that is as close to a normal home environment as possible'</i>. The statement is clear, met and reviewed and underpins the work carried out. A great deal of information about the running of the home is provided to young people and their parents in pictorial format and professionally produced DVD formats, this includes the children's guide and the home's Statement of Purpose. The environment provided to children is very child focused, safe, and stimulating. It provides children with a very pleasant and relaxed environment. Young people were, observed during the inspection, laughing and dancing with staff to music they had chosen themselves. Staff working in the home are of a high calibre. They are child centred, well trained in caring for children with complex needs and dedicated to ensuring that children get the most out of their short break. They are supported well to carry out their caring tasks through training, supervision and annual appraisals. A social worker stated, 'staff demonstrate initiative and work in partnership with parents in order	

to stay up-to-date on any family issues that may impact on behaviours during the stay.'

Children's records are of a very good quality. They identify children's individual needs and show that these are comprehensively planned for. They reflect the work that is undertaken with and provide a really good view about children's experiences and progress.

Areas for improvement include; ensuring that staff have sufficient access to computers to record entries on children's files so that records are accurate, up to date and reflect children's experiences.

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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