

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	01/09/2016
Unique reference number	SC035971
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Paul Spencer
Inspector	Lisa Mulcahy

Inspection date	01/09/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC035971

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people and staff develop strong and trusting relationships with each other, and young people enjoy their short breaks at the home. They have access to a wide range of social and recreational opportunities in the home and in the community.
- Young people are cared for by staff who know them well and who work hard to improve their overall experience and progress at the home.
- The home offers good support to young people in preparing them for independence and the transition to adulthood. They work closely with others to ensure a smooth transition for young people.
- The quality of care provided by staff means that the health needs of young people are being met well. Staff have a clear understanding of each young person's health needs, which are often complex.
- The home has a good communication system in place to ensure that parents are fully updated on the young person's time spent at the home. Staff have developed innovative ways of using technology to record the experiences and progress of young people, which they aim to develop further.
- Leaders and managers are aspirational and have a clear vision for the home, which is currently under a service review. The home has improved its internal and external monitoring and review system. However, they acknowledge that further improvement is required to ensure that it makes best use of the information to ensure continuous improvement.
- The home is well maintained and attractive following recent home improvements. It provides a good environment which clearly conveys to young people that they are valued.

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 recommendations:

- Records of restraint must be kept and should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure that it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- 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. Those undertaking the role should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. In particular, if the information provided is inaccurate this will need to be challenged and amended. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes fact, opinion and third party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides short-term breaks and respite care for children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, aged from seven to 17 years. The home is owned and managed by the local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
04/08/2015	Full	Good
10/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/06/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people look forward to coming to the home and thoroughly enjoy their stay. They are cared for by staff who know them well and who carefully plan their stays to support their needs and wishes and feelings. For example, rotas are carefully planned to enable young people to spend time at the home with staff and young people they have built positive relationships with. A young person who enjoys going to the local pub for a meal with certain staff and young people stays at the home when this can happen. Young people benefit from a wide range of social and recreational opportunities within the home and in the community; this builds their confidence and increases their social skills. They are provided with opportunities to match their individual interests and these are captured in photographs and videos so that their experiences can be shared with others and the progress they have made is evident. A parent commented, 'My son has a lot of fun at the home because he does so many different activities. He is really interested in cowboys so staff have bought him cowboy DVDs and play cowboy games with him.' Staff have a good understanding of young people's specific health needs. They work in partnership with parents and health professionals to ensure that they are up to date and fully conversant with children's health needs. The home has a very good system in place for the management of medication, which is safe and effective. A named individual is responsible for giving medication to young people each day, checking records and auditing medication stock. Consequently, discrepancies in recording are rare; if they occur they are identified and rectified immediately. Young people are supported with their education. The staff team assist them with completing their homework. The registered manager has successfully secured agreement for the home to have wifi, which will further support young people's educational needs and progress. Young people will have the opportunity to use the internet with staff support, which will further enhance their education. The views, wishes and feelings of young people are ascertained, understood and taken into account to plan their stays at the home. This results in them enjoying their time at the home. For example, dressing up clothes are available for a young person who enjoys dressing up, go-karts for a young person who enjoys driving them and a guitar is used in the home for a young person who enjoys this. Advocacy support from the National Youth Advocacy Service has been in place for young people to ensure that their views have been ascertained independently. Staff	

have developed ways of consulting with young people and increasing their participation.

Young people stay in a home that is nurturing, safe and stimulating. They are provided with a stable and consistent environment, which meets their individual needs effectively. For example, some young people enjoy using the sensory room, particularly when they arrive at the home, as this relaxes them and supports them in settling into the home quickly. Improvements in the home's decor have contributed to the welcoming atmosphere and convey to young people and staff that they are valued. A staff member commented, 'The recent improvements confirm the local authority want to invest in the home, the young people and staff'.

There are excellent links between the home and parents by the way of a home-link book. Staff complete a detailed record of the young person's time at the home, which includes information relating to their health and medication, activities, sleep pattern, friends and staff they have spent time with, food and drink they have had and any other important information. Parents are fully aware of the young person's experience and progress at the home due to the effective communication system in place.

The support that young people and their families receive from the home prior to admission is very good. A social worker spoke about the registered manager meeting with parents to discuss in detail the young person's individual needs and their worries. He provided the parents with a lot of information and reassurance, which resulted in them feeling confident their child's needs would be met at the home and he would be well cared for.

Transition support for young people moving to other services is well managed. The home works exceptionally well with the new provider to ensure that children's needs and preferences are known. Staff ensure that young people meet with the new provider and visit the new setting a number of times to ensure a smooth transition. A young person nodded when her mum commented that she was looking forward to her transition to adult services, as she was not as anxious about it due to the planning and support the home had in place for this.

There have been some changes to the amount of time young people spend at the home, which has had an impact on parents' respite time. However, they understand the change is required in order to develop the service and do not feel that it has had a detrimental effect on the young people. Young people are still provided with the same high level of care and experiences when at the home. They were taken out on activities during the inspection, including a trampoline centre and farm, and returned in time to be collected by their parents. Although changes have been made, the home was able to demonstrate that it continues to prioritise the young people and ensure that the changes have not had an impact on the experiences they have at the home.

Some young people currently are unable to use the home's vehicle when going out. This is due to it not being accessible for children or young people who are wheelchair users. This means that staff have to source alternative transport, which can be time-consuming and costly. It has also meant that young people are separated from their peers when travelling, which could affect their social interaction. However, the home has now had agreement to purchase a fully accessible vehicle, which will allow all young people to travel together. This promotes social interaction for young people, their peers and carers at all times.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people are safe and protected during their stay at the home. Parents have every confidence in the home's ability to keep them safe during their stay. This is because staff are skilled, experienced and competent. Staff are well supported and receive specific and effective safeguarding training to meet the needs of young people and keep them safe. Staff have a good understanding of the child protection and safeguarding procedures. Hence, they are able to initiate them effectively should they have a concern about a young person. A parent commented, 'I do not worry about her when she is at the home as I know staff look after her'. The health and safety practices in the home ensure that young people's safety and well-being are paramount. The home is well secured with locks and alarms to the front door to ensure that young people are unable to go out of the home alone, on account of their vulnerabilities and the risk that this would pose. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure that the premises are safe and young people know what to do if the alarm sounds. Young people do not go missing from the home due to the home's security measures and high staffing ratios, which mean that young people are supervised effectively at all times. This level of supervision also provides young people with protection from risks and hazards around the home. For example, a lock has now been placed on the door to the kitchen, which is only used when a particular young person is in the home. This is due to staff identifying the risk he places himself at by running into the kitchen. Staff will check to see if there are any immediate risks to him before they unlock the door for him. This keeps him safe and he is able to move independently around the home. Young people's risk assessments are robust. They clearly outline the risks to them. For example, a parent has raised concern in relation to a young person using the stairs as an attention-seeking ploy and not being aware of the danger to her because she is unsteady on her feet. Staff are aware of this risk and have	

strategies in place to manage it. The young person is fully supervised and encouraged to use the lift. As a result, she is learning to keep herself safe. Risk assessments are discussed at handover meetings and read by staff to ensure that they are aware of the content and can make sure that appropriate safeguards are in place for young people.

Staff are skilled in recognising an increase in stress and anxiety levels in young people that may result in challenging behaviours. They support young people effectively and use distraction and de-escalating techniques to manage behaviour effectively. For example, staff play games, sing or talk to young people. This is the preferred practice within the home and they do not use sanctions to manage behaviour. Staff are skilled in recognising that challenging behaviour presented by young people in the home is often due to their complex needs, so they will offer a more nurturing response. As a result, incidents of challenging behaviour are limited and usually very short. The effective behaviour management in the home means that the emotional and behavioural needs of young people are met.

The use of physical intervention in the home is not a practice they like to adopt and is used as a last resort. However, all staff are trained in the use of physical intervention. On two occasions since the last inspection, physical intervention has been used for the safety and well-being of young people and staff. There was some delay in the completion of records and the manager's monitoring of them. The records were not fully completed and did not outline how the information was shared with parents, which is particularly important as they are the primary caregivers for the young people. Therefore, the physical intervention records do not enable the registered manager to review of the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify any issues of concern so that a prompt response can be in place. This could place young people at risk and does not safeguard them effectively.

The registered manager and staff are able to recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns. This ensures a coordinated approach to safeguard young people. For example, when information was shared by a parent that indicated that a young person may be at risk, appropriate action was taken to ensure that relevant professionals were informed. This resulted in a child protection investigation and multi-agency strategy meeting being held to ensure that appropriate interventions were in place to safeguard the young person.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager is suitably qualified and experienced and provides strong leadership. He has been in post for a number of years and is very passionate about	

his work. He ensures that young people who access the service, and their families, receive a high-quality service that meets their needs and provides them with positive experiences while supporting their continued development. For example, he has challenged social workers to review care packages for young people to ensure they meet their needs and that they evolve in line with their changing needs. The commitment to the young people shown by the registered manager is also evident in the staff team, who work well together. The home has a reliable, committed and enthusiastic team which benefits the young people by providing them with the best possible experiences and improves outcomes for them.

Staff receive regular supervision. They confirm that they are well supported and given clear direction and guidance. One member of staff commented, 'I can go to my manager anytime I have an issue and do not have to wait for formal supervision'. However, supervision does not regularly review the progress of young people and reflect on practice and the needs of the young people. Therefore, supervision does not provide a learning environment for staff in order to develop their professional practice.

However, team meetings are regular and are used effectively to reflect on young people's progress and experience, share information and ideas about how best to meet young people's needs and manage their safety.

Staff receive a wide range of training to develop their knowledge and skills and improve practice. Training is in place individually for staff, and as a team they also receive training which is bespoke to the home. For example, staff have received in-house safeguarding training that is specific to the home and the complex needs of the young people who stay there. The full staff team, including catering and domiciliary staff, are included in this training. This highlights the importance that the registered manager places on staff training, in particular training that is tailored to the young people who stay at the home. This means the staff team are suitably trained and supported to meet the needs of young people.

Although a number of staff members are on temporary contracts, they have been in post for almost three years. Two long-term staff members have left since the last inspection. There is a new member of catering staff who has settled into the home well. Staff recruitment records were consistent with safe recruitment procedures. The remaining staff have worked in the home for many years. Having a stable staff team provides consistent, high-quality care for young people.

The home's monitoring and review systems have improved. However, the registered manager recognises that further improvement is required in order for effective monitoring systems to be in place. Monitoring reports lack analysis and evaluation. The home has appointed an independent visitor to review the quality of care and practices within the home on a monthly basis. The independent visitor produces a report each month of their findings and any recommendations. The registered manager and the independent visitor are working together to improve

the quality of these reports to ensure that robust reporting is in place which influences the development of the home and will have a positive impact on the young people.

The statement of purpose clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the home and how they will be met: 'To offer a warm, welcoming, stimulating, child friendly and non-stigmatising environment that is as close to a normal home environment as possible'. The statement of purpose is clear, met and reviewed and underpins the work carried out. Young people and their parents receive appropriate, professionally produced information about the home, including the statement of purpose, children's guide and parent information brochure.

Professional relationships between the home, families, social workers, independent reviewing officers, police, health and education services is good. Professionals share information regularly about young people to ensure that the appropriate support is in place to meet their identified needs. Furthermore, this results in a consistent approach in supporting young people in all areas of their development.

Although there has been some improvement in the quality of recording, some of the home's records lack sufficient detail. They do not do justice to the good practices in place within the home. For example, a handover meeting was observed during the inspection, which included a detailed discussion on each young person and other important information. However, handover records did not show the level of information shared at the meeting. This did not reflect that the handover was robust and that staff were provided with appropriate information to care effectively for young people.

The home has appointed a new responsible individual who is supportive of the registered manager and his desire to develop the home further. A service review is currently being undertaken to ensure that the home provides the right service in the right way to meet the needs of young people and improve outcomes for them and their families.

The leaders and managers have worked very hard to meet the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection. The improvements were clearly evident at an early stage of this inspection. The registered manager was proud to showcase some of the home improvements and practices in the home. He clearly outlined how they have met the requirements and recommendations, and wants to improve even further. This illustrated that the registered manager has high aspirations, as do his staff team. Together they are on a journey to become outstanding.

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 children looked after 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 that 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 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 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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