

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	11/01/2017
Unique reference number	SC035971
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Paul Spencer
Inspector	Lisa Mulcahy
Registered person	St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered person address	Children & Young Peoples Services, Atlas House, 2 Corporation Street, St, Helens Merseyside WA9 1LD
Responsible individual	Bob Hepworth

Inspection date	11/01/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has improved effectiveness. The home continues to be led and managed by a highly committed manager. The recommendations from the last inspection have been met. Children and young people with highly complex needs have continued to receive very good, individualised care that provides them with positive experiences and supports them to make good progress. Children and young people enjoy visiting the home and benefit greatly from all that it has to offer. They continue to engage in lots of social and recreational activities that enable them to interact and have fun with their peers and the staff who care for them. For example, they regularly visit a local activity centre that offers young people lots of stimulating and therapeutic opportunities, including trampolining and soft play. This supports their overall progress, development and social inclusion. During the inspection, children and young people were observed to be happy and relaxed. The manager and staff interacted well with them and the good relationships they have were evident. The manager and staff were able to identify that one young person was a little unwell and contacted his parent to inform them so they could make a decision as to whether they wanted their child to return home. Another young person who enjoys anything to do with cowboys and Indians happily watched a new cowboy DVD that the home had bought for him. Another young person played in the sensory room, which offers children and young people a therapeutic and relaxing environment. Staff spoke about the fun they have with young people when playing musical instruments and games. Young people smiled when they spoke about the fun things they do. A number of young people have ceased using the service since the last inspection for various reasons, including them moving on to adult provision and moving into full-time care. Transitions are carefully planned. The home offered all of the young people and their families a considerable amount of support during their transition and continue to do so as and when necessary. For example, a member of staff regularly talks with a parent on the telephone to offer advice and support and also to receive regular updates on how well the young person is settling into the new adult provision. Furthermore, the home is proactive in ensuring that young people	

are prepared for their transition by working with other providers to arrange visits to their new home, which helps ensure a smooth transition. The home's staff ensure that all information relating to the young people is shared with their new providers to ensure that there is a continuity of care.

Transitions are carefully planned for children and young people starting to have overnight stays in the home. Prior to any new admission, the manager spends a considerable amount of time talking to the parents and professionals to gather information about the child or young person and to share information about the home and the quality of care that it provides. Parents have commented that this has eased any anxieties they have about their children using the service. Visits to the family home take place by the manager and key worker, and children and young people also visit the children's home for tea several times before they begin to have overnight stays.

The manager and staff continue to promote strong links within the community, with other professionals and family members. This greatly benefits the home and the young people who access the service. The home has received donations from relatives of young people who use the service. An uncle of a young person who uses the service completed a triathlon and donated the money he raised to the home. On receiving the donation, the registered manager said, 'This will certainly go a long way in improving the lives and well-being of children and young people who rely on our service.'

Partnership working continues to be a priority for the home. The manager and staff maintain regular contact with professionals and family members to ensure that they are all fully up to date on any issues relating to young people who use the service. For example, on the day of the inspection, staff had numerous telephone calls with parents and school staff to ensure that they were fully up to date on each young person coming to the home that day. The home has developed innovative ways of sharing the progress and experiences of young people who use the service with professionals and family members. For example, for children and young people's review meetings, they prepare a video of the young person's time at the home, which includes them building their independence skills, playing games, interacting with staff and peers as well as showing them having fun. Furthermore, parents are given copies of the videos, showing them how their child is benefiting from the service.

Healthcare plans for young people clearly outline their health needs and how these are being met. The manager and staff have a good understanding of the healthcare plans in place for the children and young people who use the service. The records relating to the medication that children and young people take are clear and up to date. Records are updated to reflect changes in medication for children and young people when health professionals and parents inform the home. This ensures that children and young people continue to have the correct medication when using the service and their health needs continue to be well met.

Safeguarding practice in the home continues to be robust. There have been no significant incidents, notifications to Ofsted, complaints or incidents of restraint since the last inspection. The home does not use sanctions to deal with any challenging behaviour due to the complex needs and understanding of the children and young people. Members of staff manage challenging behaviours very well, as they know and understand the young people and their behaviour. Staff are able to identify any triggers to challenging behaviours and use distraction and de-escalation techniques to manage behaviour. Therefore, behaviour management in the home is good.

The service is currently under review. This has resulted in members of the staff team being a little unsettled and worried as to what impact the review will have on the young people who use the service and on themselves. Although the manager does his best to reassure them, they are aware that any decisions made may well be out of his hands. It is anticipated that the review will be completed in the near future, which will hopefully improve staff morale within the home.

There are a number of new initiatives being introduced into the service that the manager and staff are excited about. This includes the home offering an outreach service to young people with complex needs who live in the local authority area. A pilot of the outreach service is due to start for a young person who has used the service for a long time, but his care plan for an outreach service is more appropriate to meet his current needs. In addition to the outreach service, the home has now offered its service to a young person with complex needs from a neighbouring authority. The young person is due to start having overnight stays at the home in the next few weeks. These initiatives mean that the home is able to offer its services to a larger group of service users and support more children and young people with complex needs and their families.

The home continues to have monitoring and review systems in place to review the quality of care regularly. The home's six-monthly quality of care review is due to be completed. The home continues to have an independent person undertaking its external monthly monitoring, which the manager feels supports him to identify and address any shortfalls in practice. However, to enhance the quality of the external monitoring further, it would be beneficial for the independent visitor to spend some time each visit observing children and young people in the home.

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
01/09/2016	Full	Good
22/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
04/08/2015	Full	Good
10/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/06/2014	Full	Good

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:

- 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 24)

In particular, the independent person should make every effort to visit the home each month when children are present, to inform the monitoring process.

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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